

**War of Memory: The Civil War Continues in School
Textbooks**

By Sarah Shepherd

Introduction

The Charlottesville “Unite the Right” Rally shocked the nation last August. Thousands of Alt-Right protestors took to the streets to protect the statue of Robert E. Lee and it collapsed into a massive riot that left one person dead and many injured. It uncovered a deep divide that exists in our nation and exposed some of the intense differences in memory and understanding of the most controversial event in United States history: The Civil War. Today, many people still claim that the war was fought over states’ rights despite the modern understanding by historians that this is false. What is the cause of this massive disconnect between the historical account and public memory? Why has this narrative of states’ rights and others been so successful and long lasting? In the last fifty years historians have determined that there was a purposeful manipulation of Civil War memory by the South in the postwar era. Southern ex-Confederate proponents and Lost Cause organizations were undeniably successful at rewriting the history surrounding slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

Scholars Gaines M. Foster, Charles Reagan Wilson, David W. Blight, and many more have written about this phenomenon and the power of the Lost Cause. Wilson argued that the Lost Cause was a civil religion. He stated that southern churches and culture were so interlinked that it is impossible to understand either without the other.¹ Southern ministers were the largest celebrants of the Lost Cause.² This argument, however, ignored the role of multiple organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, United Veterans of the Confederacy, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans that played a large part in the creation and the revitalization of the Lost Cause in the 1890s. Foster also disagreed with the classification of

¹ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 12.

² *Ibid.*, 11.

the Lost Cause as a civil religion, arguing that the term “civil religion” is more likely to confuse as it has no clear definition or accepted meaning and therefore will not clarify the phenomenon.³ Blight changed the conversation; he was one of the first scholars to spearhead the use of memory to understand the postwar construction of the Lost Cause. Lost Cause literature is important, yet much of the scholarship focuses on understanding this phenomenon from primary sources such as speeches, diaries, books, published memoirs, newspapers, soldiers’ reunions, and organizations’ records. In this scholarship, there is not enough concentration on the deliberate manipulation and the calculated and targeted attempt to rewrite the history of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction by providing Lost Cause school textbooks to children.

The literature that focuses on the evolution and importance of textbooks in American history does not mention in great length the role of the Lost Cause had in influencing history. Kyle Ward only spent one-sixth of his book on the portrayal of the Civil War and Reconstruction in textbooks.⁴ He did not discuss their legacies extending into the Jim Crow era to the late twentieth century. Textbook scholars Barry Joyce and Joseph Moreau accomplished more by examining closely the shift that occurred in textbooks after the Civil War and Reconstruction, but still dedicated less than half of their book on this phenomenon.⁵ Without understanding the deliberate historical manipulation by Lost Cause proponents during the 1890s and beyond, it is not possible to fully comprehend the legacy of the Lost Cause on the American education system and greater American society. The use of pro-Confederate textbooks was undeniably successful in molding children’s perceptions, enabling the longevity of the Lost Cause ideology to this day.

³ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1856-1913*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1988), 7-8.

⁴ Kyle Roy Ward, *Not Written in Stone: Learning and Unlearning American History through 200 years of Textbooks* (New York: New Press, 2010).

⁵ Barry Joyce, *First U.S. History Textbooks: Constructing and Disseminating the American Tale in the Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann, Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

In my thesis, I will bring together the Lost Cause historiography with the textbook historiography to fully understand how the South manipulated the national historical narrative and its legacy by examining history textbooks written in the 1890s.

The 1890s was one of the most important decades in terms of forging and ensuring the Lost Cause in the nation's memory. It was full of increasing racial tensions, with the beginning of the Jim Crow era, great economic hardships, and change and corruption in the Gilded Age. This contested period was crucial for the formation of the revitalized Lost Cause narrative. It was built out of the debate and dispute that emerged in this decade. The major players in this controversy were Lost Cause organizations, the United Veterans of the Confederacy and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, neo-abolitionists, and African Americans intellectuals. The neo-abolitionists and African American intellectuals sought to overturn the Lost Cause, but its power in the public mind forced them to fight on the southerners' terms, which occasionally resulted in the reinforcement of the Lost Cause even as they challenged it. This accidental backing and ineffectual contest demonstrates the power of the Lost Cause in the national understanding of the Civil War. Despite their unintended support, these groups forged a foundation that later activists could build upon to overthrow the Lost Cause narrative.

The United Veterans of the Confederacy, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans formed in a seven-year period—1889, 1893, and 1896 respectively—and took control of history's representation of the South. One of the main missions of these organizations was to dominate the discussion to guarantee what they saw as a fair portrayal of the South. Blight outlined how historical memory became “a weapon with which to engage in the struggle over political policy and a means to sustain social and racial order.”⁶ Neo-

⁶ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 282.

abolitionists struggled to overcome this Southern narrative, but all of the antislavery societies had disbanded by 1890, denying them a platform. They were no longer united as they had differing opinions about the place of African Americans in American society. African Americans also fought to have their voices heard, but they too had difficulty as the Jim Crow era began and segregation was codified in 1896 with *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Booker T. Washington, the most influential African American leader in the 1890s, supported a social philosophy, which preached racial progress and encouraged black disenfranchisement. This view accommodated white supremacy instead of directly challenging it. His belief in racial progress and the beneficial nature of slavery helped cement the myth of the faithful slave, a core tenet of the Lost Cause.⁷ In this period of turmoil and contention, the Lost Cause was formed out of these arguments and battles. The opponents of the pro-Southern narrative challenged this account in some places and in others reinforced it. The battle was fought especially in the public arena and in schools. Therefore, it is vital to delve into the textbooks written in this decade in order to fully understand the war over the minds of the children. Textbooks are an important window into the time period as they were written in the varied biases of the time with, in most cases, clear political agendas.

In my thesis, I examined three main themes: the power of the Lost Cause, accommodation and reconciliation, and mythmaking. I analyzed four textbooks written in the post-Civil War era before the twentieth century: *A Compendium of the History of the United States* by Alexander H. Stephens (1872), *A Young Folk's History of the United States* by Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1891), *A School's History of the Negro Race in America* by Edward Austin Johnson (1891), and *School History of the United States* by Susan Pendleton Lee (1895). Using these textbooks as the focal point of my analysis, I compared how both North and South

⁷ Ibid., 331.

wrote about slavery and the Civil War to determine underlying social and political beliefs of each region. I argue that how the textbook author portrayed these historical events was calculated; each attempted to take control of the memory of the war and slavery to suit his or her own ideological purposes. Southern Lost Cause textbooks, I found, were aimed at upholding white supremacy and rewriting the history of the Civil War to reclaim the South's lost honor in defeat. They were largely successful at shaping the national historical narrative. The neo-abolitionists and African American intellectuals challenged this narrative, but in some instances, they actually worked to accommodate and further solidify it. My intent was to understand how the ideology of the Lost Cause is exemplified in these textbooks, rather than trying to prove the accuracy or inaccuracy of the authors' claims. Although I touched on this briefly, it was not the focus of my analysis.

How we teach students the history of the Civil War remains important in modern politics. The widespread belief that the Civil War was fought over states' rights instead of slavery only proves how successful the South was in erasing and dominating the nation's memory of the Civil War. It started with these textbooks and others like them. Each chapter of my thesis is devoted to one or two textbooks to delve deep into the author's background and the analysis of text. The first chapter is dedicated to pro-Confederate textbooks by Stephens and Lee. The second chapter explores the Northern neo-abolitionist perspective, by Higginson, and the last chapter analyzes the African American perspective with Johnson's textbook.

In Chapter One, the analysis focuses on Alexander H. Stephens's, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, and Susan Pendleton Lee's, *School History of the United States*, written twenty-three years apart. Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy, wrote during Reconstruction and argued for the legitimacy of secession. In his textbook, he sought to reclaim

the South's honor from its devastating defeat and introduced an early form of the Lost Cause. In contrast, Lee wrote her textbook in the 1890s during a time of great social, racial, and economic unrest at the beginning of the Jim Crow era. Born in Virginia, Lee became a teacher and her brother, father, and husband all served in the Confederate army. She was a huge proponent of the South's Lost Cause throughout her life. By contrasting these two textbooks, the Lost Cause can be better understood.

In opposition to these two books, Chapter Two explores *A Young Folk's History of the United States* by Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Higginson engaged with the Lost Cause and the dominant national narrative of reconciliation and sought to present a unique history that acknowledged the horrors of slavery, the importance of abolitionist in emancipation, and the role of African American soldiers in the Civil War. Higginson was an Unitarian minister and militant abolitionist who served as the colonel of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, the first federally authorized black regiment in the Union Army. Despite his career as an abolitionist and officer, he was a proponent of reconciliation after the war and ignored the South's racial injustice against African Americans. His textbook allowed the Lost Cause to exist unchecked.

Chapter Three analyzes Edward Austin Johnson's, *A School's History of the Negro Race in America*, which served as a supplementary textbook for children of color in the south. An ex-slave, Johnson became a black teacher and principal in North Carolina who wrote this book when he noticed that African Americans were being omitted from American history. He later became a lawyer and was the first African-American to serve on the New York State Assembly in 1917. The textbook sought to promote the progress of the black race and their role in the creation of America and beyond. In his attempt to challenge the Lost Cause, however, Johnson promoted ideas of racial uplift and racial progress, born out of the belief that slaves benefited

from slavery. This problematic idea reinforced the narrative of the faithful slave and the Lost Cause. Through a deep analysis of the textbooks of Higginson and Johnson, we can see how in their fight against the Lost Cause ideology they ended up accommodating and reinforcing it. The Lost Cause was so powerful that it still exists today.

The undeniable success of this movement is exemplified in the common phrase: The North won the war, but the South won the peace. The South won in terms of the popular memories and understanding of the Civil War. Because of the power of this narrative, its opponents often reinforced the Lost Cause. Blight concluded that “in endless refrains about true history of nonpartisanship, the preservers of the Confederate tradition built one of the most enduring and partisan mythologies in American experience.”⁸ The challenges to the Lost Cause in the nineteenth century failed but they provided the stepping stones for later activists to more successfully fight against this national narrative. The Civil Rights movement, while very powerful, did not end all racism and the Lost Cause still lingers. Understanding how and why this narrative was created and preserved through the calculated manipulation and targeting of schoolchildren is vital to fully grasping the political climate today.

⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 278.

Chapter 1: The Creation of a Dominant National Memory: How the White South Won

The Lost Cause evolved over time, mirroring political, social, and economic trends in the United States. By examining the different forms of the Lost Cause in the context of the time period, we can complicate our understanding of this movement. In this chapter, I will illustrate the creation of the Lost Cause by looking at its evolution from Alexander Stephens's 1872 textbook, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, to Susan Pendleton Lee's 1895 textbook, *A School History of the United States*. Stephens wrote his textbook during the post-war destruction and anxiety of defeat amid the political, economic, and racial tensions of Reconstruction when the Lost Cause was first expressed. In his textbook, Stephens focused heavily on reclaiming the South's lost honor by establishing the legality of the South's right to secede and defining why the South lost. He highlighted the political and militaristic aspects of the Civil War.

In contrast, Lee wrote in the 1890s, just as the United States was entering the tension ridden Gilded Age. In the anxiety of a rapidly changing society, increasing immigration, and economic crash of 1893, the Lost Cause was revitalized as a safe haven in the South in a new world of uncertainty. As a result, Lee was much more focused on the glorification of the Old South and the Confederacy. She concentrated more on the southern people and dramatized each ordeal. In the uncertainty of the future, Lee's Lost Cause idealized the past in utopian imaginings. In order to understand the differences between the way these two authors interacted with the formation of the Lost Cause, we must first explore their backgrounds.

The Pale Star of Georgia

Much has been written about Alexander Hamilton Stephens, the often sickly, Vice President of the Confederacy, nicknamed "The Pale Star of Georgia." Stephens was an

interesting character. He voted against secession, but when his home state of Georgia seceded, he complied, eventually becoming the second most powerful man in the Confederate government. Born in 1812 in Georgia, his childhood was marred by tragedy after his mother died three months after his birth. His remarried father and stepmother both later died when he was 14, leaving Alexander and his siblings with different relatives. He grew up destitute and struggled with his health. Ultimately, he gained several sponsors to help with his education, earned his law degree in 1834, and became a very successful lawyer.

After entering politics in 1836, he served terms in the Georgia House and Senate and in Congress. He began to accumulate great wealth; by the beginning of the Civil War, he owned thirty slaves and several thousand acres. Stephens was one of the leading Southern Whigs in Congress, but as the political conflict intensified between the North and the South after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he was forced to pick a side and became a Democrat. Like many other Southern Whigs, Stephens was initially opposed to secession despite his ardent support of slavery, but when it was evident that the South was seceding, he unhappily sided with his state. When Georgia seceded, he confided in his brother; “we are going to destruction...nothing can arrest our course.”⁹ Despite his initial resistance, he ultimately embraced secession and was elected Vice President of the Confederacy. Despite his acceptance, Stephens publicly opposed many of President Davis’s policies, including conscription and the suspension of *habeas corpus*. Towards the end of the war, he advocated for peace, even meeting with President Lincoln, though nothing came of it. After the war, he served several more terms in Congress once the ban on former Confederates was lifted. He was elected the Governor in Georgia but died four months later in 1883.

⁹ William C. Davis, *The Union that Shaped the Confederacy: Robert Toombs & Alexander H. Stephens*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 3.

Vice President Stephens, in his Cornerstone Speech in 1861, unapologetically declared that the Confederacy's "foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery--subordination to the superior race--is his natural and normal condition."¹⁰ This clear-cut explanation that Southern secession, and thus the Civil War, was based on slavery was later completely denied by Lost Cause writers, including Stephens in his later textbook. The belief that the Civil War was based on states' rights and not slavery was a core tenet of both Stephens's and Lee's variants of the Lost Cause.

In *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, Stephens perpetuated the early Lost Cause narrative. He wrote that the history of the Civil War, or the "War Between the States"¹¹ as he calls it, was a terrible tragedy launched by aggressive, militant Abolitionists or the "Agitators"¹² in the North and fought over states' rights. He further claimed that the South was defeated only by sheer force of numbers. In his eyes, the war culminated in the "horrible oppression" of white people in the South during Reconstruction. Stephens saw Reconstruction as a "new war...against the Constitution itself, which the entire fabric of American free institutions was based."¹³ Throughout Reconstruction, Stephens was horrified by what he saw as the elevation of African Americans. As a white supremacist, he denied the reprehensible nature of slavery and the existence of slave resistance. All of these themes embody the early Lost Cause narrative, which was focused on the politics of secession and defeat, born out of postwar anxieties, and the racial tensions of Reconstruction.

"A Woman of Higher Culture"¹⁴

¹⁰ Alexander H. Stephens, *Cornerstone Speech*, (Savannah, Georgia: March 21, 1861).

¹¹ Alexander H. Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States* (New York: E. J. Hale & Son Publishers, 1872), 422.

¹² *Ibid.*, 471

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *The Lexington Gazette*, "Death of Mrs. Susan P. Lee," Lexington: December 13, 1911.

Susan Pendleton Lee was born in 1832 in Lexington, Virginia. Her father, William Nelson Pendleton, was a West Point graduate, mathematics professor, and Episcopal priest. As such, he provided an exceptional education for Susan. It was this educational foundation—Latin, Greek, French, higher mathematics, and English literature and writing—that paved the way for Lee to become a teacher and historian.¹⁵ Her level of education was noteworthy for a woman during that period.¹⁶ Therefore, it's unsurprising that her obituary described her as a “woman of higher culture.” Lee was born in a society of prescribed gender roles: she described her brother as someone whose “delicate constitution and timid dread of pain threatened to make him too effeminate to satisfy the expectations of his fond parents.”¹⁷ This hyper masculinity and firm gender roles resulted in the strict patriarchal culture of the South. In late 1856, Susan Pendleton married Edwin Gray Lee, the first cousin once removed of Robert E. Lee.

When the war started, Lee's father, husband, and brother all joined the Confederate army. Her father served as the Chief of Artillery for Robert E. Lee and as a brigadier general. He was not well-liked by his soldiers or by other generals who saw him as incompetent. It's possible that these criticisms of her father inspired Susan Pendleton Lee to write her father's memoir in 1893, ten years after his death, which portrayed him in a saint-like light. Her brother served as an aide to Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson and was killed during the retreat after the Battle of Fishers Hill in 1864. Her husband, Edwin Gray Lee, struggled with his health his whole life, but joined the Confederate Army when war broke out and became a brigadier general. He was also a part of the Confederate Secret Service and was in charge of their operation in Canada for a year.

¹⁵ Susan Pendleton Lee, *A School History of the United States* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1895), 92.

¹⁶ *The Lexington Gazette*, “Death of Mrs. Susan P. Lee.”

¹⁷ Susan Pendleton Lee, *Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D.D.*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1893), 91.

Susan Pendleton Lee was not idly waiting at home during the war. There is evidence that she and Edwin ran the Union blockade on a secret service mission to Canada, however, the extent to which Susan played a part in the war or how much she helped her husband is unknown.¹⁸ Her largest role came after the war, when she helped preserve the history of the Confederacy and helped develop the narrative of the revived Lost Cause.

In 1895, Lee wrote her first history textbook, *A School History of the United States*. Her book was a large success with ex-Confederates and lauded as a textbook that portrayed the history of the True South.¹⁹ While *A School History of the United States* shared similar arguments as the early Lost Cause in Stephens's textbook, it diverged by refocusing and intensifying them during the height of Lost Cause mythmaking in the 1890s. Lee dramatically portrayed the Confederacy as a government that could do no wrong and a people who were all brave, strong, and true. Lee's book was widely read in the South; in 1900, South Carolina chose to use Lee's texts exclusively in the state and Virginia used her book in almost every district, illustrating the widespread nature and acceptance of this Lost Cause narrative in the South.²⁰

The Lost Cause

The five main tenets of the revitalized Lost Cause are the belief of states' rights not slavery as the cause of the war, the invincibility of the South, the cult of the fallen soldier, the victimization of the South, and the myth of the faithful slave. The evolution of these tenets of Lost Cause is clear when comparing the textbooks written by Stephens and Lee. The differences were not only surface level, but the deeper messages were radically different. Stephens wrote during Reconstruction and focused on establishing the legitimacy of the South's secession and

¹⁸ Ibid., 379.

¹⁹ Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann, Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 78.

²⁰ Ibid.

reclaiming the South's honor lost in defeat. Lee wrote during the social, racial, and economic anxieties of the 1890s and focused more on the glorification of the Old South and Confederacy to provide a safe haven as the future became more uncertain and unfamiliar.

The first construction of the Lost Cause was undoubtedly born out of the terrible grief, physical destruction, and psychological trauma that plagued the South after the Civil War. One historian described Southerners as “deeply shocked by what they perceived as a calamity of unknown but awesome proportions...[they were] demoralized and disorientated.”²¹ The South was devastated and, out of the ashes, the Lost Cause was created to regain its honor and legitimacy. The first Lost Cause movement was led by Southern elites, both confederate generals and politicians, who endlessly defended the South's right to secede and rationalized their defeat, which was reflected in Stephens' textbook. In general, Southern society did not favor the elitist first Lost Cause and the end of Reconstruction lessened the importance of the issues of the war, allowing it to fade.²²

The later, more powerful and long-lasting form of the Lost Cause, was born out the social and economic anxieties of the 1890s. One historian stated that the new movement created by middle class ex-Confederates who were not wartime leaders “succeeded in mobilizing a broad spectrum of the veteran population, spurred the formation of two societies of descendants, and directed a celebration of the Confederacy.”²³ The triumph of the revitalized Lost Cause is largely due to three very successful Lost Cause organizations formed in the 1890s: the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). The SCV and UDC remain active today.

²¹ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1856-1913*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13.

²² *Ibid.*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, 114.

The UDC and the UCV explicitly understood that the war of memory was fought in the schools; whoever won the hearts and minds of the next generation guaranteed the success of their movement.²⁴ They formed historical committees to control and monitor the textbooks given to Southern children. The UCV concluded that a historical committee should be created so that the “proper presentation, recording and perpetuation of the glorious deeds, heroism and virtues of the Confederate soldiers, statesmen and people, may be taught to our children and handed down to posterity.”²⁵ They had three categories into which they grouped history textbooks:

first, Northern books that were ‘pronouncedly unfair to the South’; second, Northern-authored works that were ‘apparently fair’ but still judged objectionable’; and third, ‘Southern histories,’ those that passed all of some nine tests, including whether a book had properly represented the ‘unparalleled patriotism manifested by the Southern people in accepting’ the war’s results.²⁶

Here the bias is obvious and the targeted manipulation of history clear. Only eight textbooks passed muster in 1894, including Stephens’s.²⁷ Later Lee’s book was added later when it came out in 1895.²⁸ These lists were relied heavily on by Southern state textbook adoption committees.

One of the main differences between the two textbooks, reflective of their different missions, was the space dedicated to the Civil War. Lee spent an extraordinary one hundred and ninety-two pages to the Civil War²⁹, while Stephens only fifty.³⁰ While some of this difference could be attributed to the varying lengths of their textbooks, the percentages are striking: Lee spent about thirty-one percent of her book on the war, while Stephens only about ten percent.

²⁴ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 277.

²⁵ *United Confederate Veteran Historical Committee*, “Third Annual Meeting,” New Orleans, Louisiana: 8-9, April 1892, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/00869682298>, 98.

²⁶ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 282.

²⁷ *United Confederate Veteran Historical Committee*, “Fourth Annual Meeting”, Birmingham, Alabama: 25-26, April 1894, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/00869682298>, 11.

²⁸ *United Confederate Veteran Historical Committee*, “Sixth Annual Meeting”, New Orleans, Louisiana: June 30 to July 2, 1896, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/00869682298>, 41.

²⁹ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 346-538.

³⁰ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 418-468.

The different level of attention between Stephens and Lee reflected the different goals of their books. Lee was more focused on the glorification of the Confederacy, demonstrating the idea of a safe haven in the past, while Stephens was fixated on regaining Southern honor and proving the legitimacy of secession. Lee's concentration on deification of the South necessitated greater elaboration on the subject.

In the following sections in this chapter, I will examine how Stephens and Lee illustrate the evolution and core tenets of the Lost Cause in their textbooks to more fully understand the long-lasting phenomenon that rewrote the national narrative of the Civil War.

States' Rights Not Slavery

The belief that the Civil War was fought over states' rights not slavery was paramount to Southern memory of the war. This assertion was found in both Stephens' and Lee's textbooks to differing extents. Stephens focused heavily on the politics and legitimacy of secession while Lee was more combative in her portrayal of the North. One explanation for Lee's belligerence was that she was writing in the 1890s when the South was more powerful politically than it was in the uncertainty of Reconstruction.

Stephens saw the election of Lincoln as "entirely sectional"³¹ as he had "been elected without having received a majority of the popular vote."³² In his defense of secession, he declared that this election was the final proof of the Northern "breach of faith" and threat to Southern independence.³³ Stephens attempted to establish Lincoln's election as illegitimate therefore making the South's secession justifiable.³⁴ He wrote that Northern states "had enacted laws which either nullified the acts of Congress for the rendition of fugitives from service, or

³¹ Ibid., 448.

³² Ibid., 419.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 420.

rendered useless any attempt to execute them, and...with inciting servile insurrection.”³⁵ To Stephens, these acts pointed to the overreach and attempted domination of the North over the South. Northern aggression was the reason for secession, not slavery. Stephens emphasized that when the Union declared war on the South they made no mention of slavery.³⁶ Slavery was not discussed until a meeting of abolitionists met in secret with President Lincoln to demand that the war be fought over slavery.³⁷ The Emancipation Proclamation was issued after this meeting. Here, Stephens placed the blame of the war and the issue of slavery as the cause of the war in the hands of the “Agitators” and anti-slavery Republicans. At the end of the war, he reiterated that the “Confederates waged war with the great object of maintaining the inestimable sovereign right of local self-government on the part of the Peoples of the Several States.”³⁸ Stephens did not discuss the idea that the South fought for slavery only stating that it was about the South’s independence from Northern aggression. In a way, he side-stepped the issue by not going into depth, but simply announcing the reason was states’ rights. He was not defensive in his portrayal, which is extraordinary considering his cornerstone speech in 1861 declared that slavery was the reason for secession.

In contrast, Lee wrote defensively and at every step, she reiterated and re-proved that the war was fought over states’ rights instead of proclaiming it like Stephens. Lee, more so than Stephens, was belligerent because of the different influences in their time periods. For Lee, the War of Northern Aggression was the basis of the powerful Lost Cause of the 1890s. The romanticized past was a matter of Southern pride and identity. Here, the cause of the war was critical; both authors needed to prove that there was nothing to criticize. This innocence was

³⁵ Ibid., 419-420.

³⁶ Ibid., 431.

³⁷ Ibid., 444-445.

³⁸ Ibid., 466.

even more pivotal to Lee because of her emphasis on glorification. Unlike Stephens, who only briefly discussed the reasons for the war, Lee had five separate sections outlining her argument of why the South is right and the North wrong, titled, “Necessity of Secession,”³⁹ “The Struggle for Southern Independence Necessary,”⁴⁰ “Centralization and State Rights,”⁴¹ “Slavery Recognized by the Constitution,”⁴² and “War not to Preserve Slavery.”⁴³ These titles demonstrated her preoccupation with establishing the cause of the war as states’ rights. The sections waxed lyrically, stating that the Constitution had been “openly and boastingly violated by the Northern States,”⁴⁴ “the Demagogues and anti-Southern men...in favor of... ‘a little blood-letting,’”⁴⁵ “the [Northern] politicians [took] advantage of the abolitionists doctrine...to increase the opposition to the South, which was aggravated by a growing jealousy of her civilization and prosperity,”⁴⁶ and how “the Southern States had no desire for war.”⁴⁷ Lee argued clearly that the North was impinging on the rights of the White South, leaving them no choice but to defend their freedom. Lee’s intense rehashing of this point accentuated its importance in the revitalized Lost Cause. To Lee, President Lincoln’s emphasis that ending slavery was not the goal of the war until the North began to fear defeat proved the Southern states’ rights basis of secession.⁴⁸ She outlined the three objects of the Proclamation:

to stir up the slaves, hitherto very peaceable and docile, to turn against their masters, and thereby weaken the Southern armies by compelling the white men to remain to home to protect their families from the outrage and violence of the negroes; to make the people of Europe believe that the South was fighting to maintain slavery, if it did not at once throw down its arms and acquiesce in this wholesale robbery; and to place the Democratic

³⁹ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 348.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 359.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 435.

party, always opposed to meddling with the question which it believed each State must settle for itself, in antagonism to the administration and make it appear unwilling to carry on the war.⁴⁹

While there may be truth in these charges, this set of assertions is combative. Here, it was apparent where Stephens and Lee deviate. Stephens in the 1870s was not as strong in his castigation of the North, except in his account of the Reconstruction. This was partly due to the early focus of the Lost Cause: reclaiming the honor of the South within the politics of Reconstruction. Lee, on the other hand, was committed to the glorification and creation of a mythicized vision of the Confederacy. Her description of the enslaved as “very peaceable and docile” highlighted the narrative of the faithful slave that was a core tenet of the Lost Cause. Lee’s powerful censure of the Emancipation Proclamation served to illustrate the increasing Confederate and white supremacist fervor that surged during the troubled time of the 1890s.

The Invincibility of the South

The belief that the South was overwhelmed by the North’s greater numbers and resources was one of the core tenets of the Lost Cause. This certainty stemmed from the need to re-establish Southern military might and moral superiority as “defeat in battle and the exigencies of the war’s aftermath wounded Southerners’ confidence in their righteousness, honor, and manliness.”⁵⁰ Military prowess and morality were often combined in Southern thought; during the Civil War many Southern religious leaders preached that their “cause was a holy one” and a common belief was in “the baptism of blood.”⁵¹ This intense terminology implied that the war brought a “redemption from past sins, an atonement, and a sanctification for the future.”⁵² Defeat

⁴⁹ Ibid., 435-436.

⁵⁰ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 13.

⁵¹ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 4-5.

⁵² Ibid.

was demoralizing and emasculating for Southern men who were raised in the hyper patriarchal Southern society. To restore their honor as men and soldiers, the Lost Cause creators blamed their loss on the North's overwhelming numbers and greater resources.

This phenomenon was apparent in the way that Stephens and Lee documented the war. Stephens described the last battle of the Confederate army as “the remaining thinned but resolute and undaunted columns of the Confederate chief, like the Spartan band at Thermopylae, were soon brought to their last death-grapple with the monster army of the Potomac.”⁵³ This comparison to the Spartan army was particularly telling; the Spartans were considered the far superior warriors and managed to hold off the greater Persian army at Thermopylae until they were overwhelmed by its sheer size. Stephens not only invoked the imagined nobility of the Greeks, but also insinuated that the South was superior in everything but numbers.

This narrative was clearly prevalent in both Stephens's and Lee's retelling of the Civil War. In almost every battle, they listed the numbers of each side to demonstrate how the South was greatly outnumbered, using terms such as “overwhelming numbers,”⁵⁴ “the federal forces...[were] nearly double,”⁵⁵ “greatly superior numbers,”⁵⁶ “overcome by sheer force of numbers,”⁵⁷ and so on. These mentions had multiple purposes, including accentuating the South's military superiority when they won and their heroic and noble attempts against a much larger force when they lost.

In the battles that the South won, it was often portrayed as the result of the South's military genius. Stephens asserted, in the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862, “the Federals still

⁵³ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 464.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁵⁶ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 370.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 395-396.

greatly exceeded the Confederates in numbers. The result, however, was the achievement of Lee of another most brilliant victory.”⁵⁸ Stephens focused heavily on the presentation of Southern military prowess. In his accounts of battles, he described Northern defeats in greater detail than Southern losses. Five times he used the phrase “utterly routed”⁵⁹ or “completely routed”⁶⁰ to describe a Union defeat. He only used this language of “routed” in terms of a Confederate defeat twice, even though the Confederacy lost the war. Lee gave a dramatic portrayal of the Confederate victory of the Battle of Manassas:

Rout of the Federal army...the only idea seemed to be to get away as fast as possible...but terror was stronger than discipline, and the fine army which has marched out from Washington with bands playing and banners flying, accompanied by members of Congress and ministers of the Gospel, eager to witness the destruction of the rebels and the capture of Richmond, poured back into the city, disorganized and demoralized.⁶¹

Lee’s poignant language here accentuated the belief in the military brilliance of the South. For Stephens and Lee, this skill especially revolved around Robert E. Lee. Stephens announced that “the military genius displayed by Lee...will ever place him high in the rank of the first class of commanders who have figured in the world’s history.”⁶² The supremacy of General Lee was one of the early beliefs of the Lost Cause. One historian agrees, as he confirmed that, “they made Robert E. Lee into the God-like embodiment of a leader whose cause could only be defeated by overwhelming odds.”⁶³ This faith in “the military and moral infallibility of Lee” was also true of the later 1890s form of the Lost Cause.⁶⁴ Susan Pendleton Lee declared that the triumph of Jackson and Lee “over the armies collected to crush them, excited the wonder and admiration of the world, and led their soldiers to believe that Southern prowess must ultimately gain Southern

⁵⁸ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 445.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 338.

⁶¹ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 374.

⁶² Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 448.

⁶³ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 258.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

independence.”⁶⁵ Lee not only believed strongly in the South’s military preeminence over the North but also in their moral excellence in their attempt to fight for what is right, despite overwhelming odds. This superiority played a large part in the glorification of the Confederacy.

Lee dedicated an entire section to the relative strength of the opposing sides at the onset of war, which outlined the numerous advantages the North had over the South: population, industry, and resources. Her next passage described the advantages the South had over the North, most distinctly, their moral excellence. She exemplified this superiority by outlining the difference between the behavior of the armies. Robert E. Lee’s “magnanimous conduct” in the march to Gettysburg was in direct contrast to the “barbarous” behavior of the North.⁶⁶ Lee’s textbook was full of extravagant imagery describing the people of the South as tireless in their devotion, love, and courage to the Confederate cause. She declared that the reason for the success of the “smaller and weaker Southern army is to be found in the earnest determination of each soldier to defend his rights and his home to his utmost even to the laying down of his life.”⁶⁷ This dramatic and emotive language illustrated the depth of Lee’s bias. It demonstrated how she firmly believed in Southern moral superiority and the glory of their cause. Similarly, her partiality was demonstrated in her focus on the heroic and noble common soldier.

The belief that the South lost the war because of their smaller army was so prevalent that “in an interview in 1878, Ulysses S. Grant complained about ‘historians’ who kept rehearsing the argument that the Union forces had ‘overwhelmed the South’ with numbers.”⁶⁸ Lost Cause mythmaking was so effective that it was prevalent in the North and had reached Grant by 1878. One of the main problems of this narrative, besides the belief in the Southerners’ superior

⁶⁵ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 433.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 450.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁶⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 93.

military skill and moral authority, was the implicit assumption that the South's defeat was inevitable. As this was decidedly not the case, this presumption undermined the uncertainty and fear of this time and the skill and effort of Union generals and soldiers.

The Cult of the Fallen Soldier

The movement to reconcile the North and the South became increasingly popular in the North and the South after the war. This mindset was perpetuated through the cult of the fallen soldier which tried to reunite the United States through an acknowledgment of the equal suffering of both sides during the war.⁶⁹ Reconciliation, the desire to put adversity and anguish behind them, was provoked by economic and political pressure to embrace the South as soon as possible; "sectional reconciliation, was, of course, good for business and investment."⁷⁰ The brotherhood between Northern and Southern soldiers was especially encouraged and was centered around the "values of manliness, valor, sacrifice, and a mutual sense of honor."⁷¹ Blight concluded that "slavery was everyone's and no one's responsibility. America's bloody racial history was to be banished from consciousness; the only notions of equality contemplated were soldiers' heroism and the exchange of the business deal."⁷² During reconciliation, Blue and Gray soldiers were made into equal champions in the national memory. By emphasizing bravery on both sides of the war, the North became complicit in advancing the ideology of the Lost Cause.

The cult of the fallen soldier manifested itself differently in the strictly pro-Confederate Lost Cause narrative. While there was some acknowledgement of the bravery of soldiers on both sides, the South focused more on the courage of the Confederate soldiers. The South did not see

⁶⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 199-200.

⁷¹ Ibid., 199-200.

⁷² Ibid., 205.

the North as an equally honorable partner; in order to portray the physically devastated South as the victim, the North needed to be seen as the aggressor.

Stephens and Lee interacted with the cult of the fallen soldier, but in almost all cases they prioritized the suffering of the South over the North. Stephens was more likely to acknowledge each sides' bravery, with such descriptions as "the fighting on both sides was heroic and desperate...neither side acknowledged defeat."⁷³ His language was less decorative and emotional than Lee's; he spent fewer pages on the battles or the common soldier. He was terse in his explanations of the attacks, only describing them as having "great valor and fury."⁷⁴ He contributed to the cult of the fallen soldier with his conclusion of the conflict:

It lasted four years and a little over, as we have seen, with numerous sanguinary conflicts, and heroic exploits on both sides not chronicled in this Compendium; but many of which will live in memory, and be perpetuated as legends, and thus be treasured up as themes for story and song for ages to come.⁷⁵

Stephens acknowledged the bravery on both sides, building on the cult of the fallen soldier. As part of the early stage of the Lost Cause, he did not condemn the entire North to the extent that Lee did, except in his view of Reconstruction. Stephens, at heart, believed in the Union and only followed his state into secession.

In contrast, Lee was bluntly pro-Confederate. Any mention of Northern courage appeared simultaneously with mentions of Southern bravery in overgeneralized statements such as "there were brave men and bold fighting in both armies,"⁷⁶ "the fighting was gallant on both sides, but inch by inch, the Northern line was forced back,"⁷⁷ "thousands of brave men had fallen on both

⁷³ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 444.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁷⁶ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 375.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 390.

sides,”⁷⁸ and the “fighting was gallant on both sides.”⁷⁹ These mentions were most often made only when horrendous loss of life occurred, such as in the Battle of Gettysburg or the Battle of Chickamauga. The incredible bloodshed established these battles as tragedies, and therefore the bravery of the soldiers on both sides was acknowledged.

The suffering the Southerners were forced to endure during the Civil war intensified the portrayal of the courage of the South and its soldiers. Despite the hardship, Lee stated that “no means were left untried...for the maintenance of the soldiers, who had given and risked everything to defend their country.”⁸⁰ The spirits of Confederate soldiers were often enhanced by comparing the amount of resources. Lee concluded that:

Burnside’s men had good clothing, ample provisions, and good tents. The Confederate army was forced to supplement their inadequate supply of tents by bushes and their scanty blankets; their food consisted of a small ration of fat bacon and corn bread, and their clothing principally of ragged suits which had seen many a battle. Their long marches were especially destructive to shoes, and many soldiers were entirely barefooted. All these hardships did not diminish their spirit nor deaden their patriotism.⁸¹

This description pointed to the greater suffering of Southern soldiers; to Lee, the South’s resolve was never shattered and continued after the war through the Lost Cause narrative. Their spirits were unbroken, in spite of all their torment.

The Victimization of the South

The South was destroyed by the war. Its major cities were left in smoldering ruins and the pride and honor of Southerners were humiliatingly stripped away. Reconstruction, seen as a “hated, imposed regime,”⁸² allowed the South to portray themselves as a victim of “Yankee ‘despotism’ and ‘bayonet rule.’” This depiction helped shape a new identity and a final Southern

⁷⁸ Ibid., 452.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 466.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 383

⁸¹ Ibid., 417.

⁸² Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 106.

victory over the North with the overthrow of Reconstruction.⁸³ Stephens and Lee split the southern victimization narrative in three components: the North as an aggressor, Northern destruction during the war, and the forced oppression of the South during Reconstruction. They also engaged with the debate surrounding the prison memories of the war.

A Declaration of War against the Confederate States

When describing the South's decision to secede, Stephens and Lee emphasized the multiple attempts by the South to come to an agreement with the North. Stephens asserted that "great efforts were made at reconciliation;"⁸⁴ Lee agreed, "in proof of their desire for peace, one of their first acts was to send commissioners to Washington to establish peaceable relations."⁸⁵ All efforts were rebuffed, which legitimized the portrayal of the North as the aggressor. It similarly allowed the South to place the responsibility of the war on the North as they claimed they tried to stop it. Stephens declared that the North started the war by "sending of the fleet to reinforce Fort Sumter [which], under the circumstances, was viewed by them...as 'a declaration of war against the Confederate States.'"⁸⁶ Lee echoed this belief in her section, "Bombardment of Fort Sumter an Act of Self-Defense," reiterating that the act of sending the fleet was equivalent to declaring war and that the South only responded logically to the incoming threat.⁸⁷ Stephens declared that the side that starts the war "is not the first who uses force, but the first who renders force necessary."⁸⁸ He continued in this vein with a further censure of the North:

The telegraphic announcement of the fall of Sumter enabled the Agitators to inflame the minds of the people of the Northern States under the influence to a higher pitch than ever, and to add to their ranks large accessions from the Democratic and American parties...Upon the Confederates was charged the guilt of a desecration of the national

⁸³ Ibid., 117.

⁸⁴ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 421.

⁸⁵ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 352.

⁸⁶ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 425.

⁸⁷ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 357.

⁸⁸ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 428-429.

flag, and with it the crime of treason. The beginning of the war with all its responsibilities was laid at their door.⁸⁹

This quotation demonstrated how the Confederates held this common belief that the abolitionists turned Northern and global public opinion against them. Although it may be true that the South was blamed, Stephens and Lee used this responsibility of the war as proof of southern victimization.

The Physical Destruction of the South and its People by the North

During the 1890s, the Lost Cause, steeped heavily in mythmaking, began focusing more on the victimization of the South. As Stephens wrote two decades earlier, he focused more on military tactics and politics. Most of Stephens' victim narrative was based on General Sheridan's and General Sherman's widespread destruction. Stephens described General Sherman's march as "laying waste the country in a belt of nearly thirty miles in breadth."⁹⁰ Stephens gave no explanation for this demolition as a military tactic nor did he mention the South's attempts to do so in the North. He described how after General Sheridan's obliteration of Confederate General Early's troops, "[Sheridan] then proceeded to lay waste and devastate the rich and fertile Valley of the Shenandoah—destroying everything within his reach upon which man or domestic animal could subsist."⁹¹ Stephens did not go into further detail.

In contrast, Lee spoke poetically about the wholesale destruction of the South and the cruelty the Northern armies inflicted on the Southern people. In her description of Robert E. Lee's march to Gettysburg, she asserted that "no violence of any sort was done to any citizen, no woman was insulted, and no gratifications of private revenge permitted."⁹² She continued and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 428.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 460.

⁹¹ Ibid., 457.

⁹² Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 450.

stated pointedly that “their magnanimous conduct was in similar contrast to the behavior of the Federal armies...generally marked by ‘barbarous destruction upon innocent and defenseless, and the wanton destruction of private property.’”⁹³ This quote again outlined Lee’s belief in the moral superiority of the South. Her impassioned attitude towards the Northern destruction of the South marked her tone and outrage for the rest of the war.

In the accounts of the devastation, she described that “any and everything was ruthlessly stolen or rendered useless to its former owners,”⁹⁴ “power in so brutal a manner,”⁹⁵ “destruction upon Confederate property everywhere,”⁹⁶ “downtrodden and devastated,”⁹⁷ “a work of absolute destruction,”⁹⁸ “nearly wiped out of existence,”⁹⁹ and the “barbarity of their assailants.”¹⁰⁰ This imagery reflected the intense perception of the South as a victim before a power-hungry, ruthless North. This remarkably antagonistic rhetoric was mostly likely not well received in the North. Lee’s textbook was clearly written for a Southern audience, not a Northern one.

The Southern people endured innumerable humiliations at the hands of the North. Lee emphasized that women especially were treated cruelly. General Sherman justified this savagery by stating “we are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war.”¹⁰¹ Lee answered, “hard it was, indeed, as he laid it on the defenseless women and children of Georgia.”¹⁰² This was the pinnacle of barbarity to harm the innocent citizens in the war. Lee used the image of virtuous women to heighten the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 412.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 422.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 423.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 462.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 474.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 475.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 508.

¹⁰² Ibid.

sense of Northern brutality and the purity of the South. She declared that “insults and indignities of every kind were heaped upon the citizens, especially upon the women,”¹⁰³ and “he [General Butler] was most insulting to the women of the city...and issued a proclamation to his men to treat them with shameful indignity.”¹⁰⁴ In some way, the harm done to Southern women personified the injury done to the South as a whole; the South was often seen as feminine entity. This connection reflected the belief in the emasculation of Southern men with the defeat of the Confederacy. One historian discussed this phenomenon: in the Lost Cause tradition, “Confederates may have been Christian heroes and saints; nonetheless, they failed to protect their women—and symbolically, their civilization—from rape by the Yankees.”¹⁰⁵ Lee agreed as she described the end of 1864 with this personification of the South:

most of her territory was cut to pieces and overrun by her enemies. She was at the end of her resources. Her money was worthless. What soldiers she still had in the field were half naked and half starved, while the people at home were little better off.¹⁰⁶

The image of the South as a feminine entity enabled the narrative of victimhood more easily, especially when juxtaposed, as Lee does, with emotive language describing the atrocities that the North committed against the South and its people. It shed light into the desperation that Southern men felt in the need to reclaim their honor as men and soldiers. This intense portrayal again highlighted how Lee was focused only on the Southern perspective and did not seem to be concerned with reconciliation.

Reconstruction: The Oppression of the South

Initially, the Lost Cause was formed in response to, what ex-Confederates considered, the oppression of the Southern whites. This original narrative was created during the post-war era of

¹⁰³ Ibid., 517.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 423.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 47.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 512.

heightened racial conflict and tension. According to Blight, “the image of Reconstruction as black domination... would become one of the deepest strains of American historical consciousness ideology taken too in the next generation.”¹⁰⁷ Reconstruction was deeply controversial because of this dominant narrative. These deep racial anxieties formed the early Lost Cause. The belief that Southerners were oppressed during Reconstruction played a crucial part in Stephens’s textbook. Lee also saw Reconstruction as tyrannical, but not to the same extent. The end of Reconstruction allowed Southern Lost Cause proponents to create a myth of the South’s triumph and victory over Northern oppression. Lee highlighted the suffering of the South during Reconstruction to make the end success more poignant, but to Stephens it was a very real danger. Despite this different underlying message, Stephens and Lee had similar perspectives on Reconstruction.

Stephens’s view of Reconstruction was very negative; the South was unlawfully punished as secession was legitimate. Stephens concluded that the North’s goal was “to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of the white people of the States to be ‘reconstructed,’ with the general enfranchisement of the males of the Negro race.”¹⁰⁸ The easy connection that Stephens drew between the denial of ex-Confederates of the right to vote and the Fifteenth Amendment demonstrated how this narrative of black tyranny in the South formed. He continued that “thus was inaugurated by the Agitators a new war, not only upon these States, but upon the Constitution itself, which the entire fabric of American free institutions was based.”¹⁰⁹ This dramatic language demonstrated the intense hatred of the Northern military regime at this time. The oppression of the South at its greatest moment was exemplified in the Enforcement Act of

¹⁰⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 22.

¹⁰⁸ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 471.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

1870 which Stephens called a “direct [attack] upon public liberty.”¹¹⁰ He believed that the law to try to stop the acts of murder, violence, and terror against African Americans in the South by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) went against the public liberty of white Southerners. The fact that Stephens stated this unironically greatly reflects how intense the racial conflict was in the South during Reconstruction. He went even further in his castigation:

Without further specification, it may be stated, that all the leading features of the present Administration and its general policy point...will lead ultimately, to the entire overthrow of the Federal system, and the subversion of all the free institutions thereby attempted to be secured on the American Continent, and the history of which we have traced.¹¹¹

Stephens outlined that if Reconstruction did not end that the United States and the republican experiment will fail. This is a powerful statement that reflects how strongly ex-Confederates felt about the military regime. It could also be construed as a warning to the United States; if they want the Union to prosper, Reconstruction must end.

Lee recognized the South as a victim during Reconstruction in three parts: the suffering of Jefferson Davis, black tyranny controlled by Northern Radical Republicans, and the oppression of Southern whites. Jefferson Davis was a symbol to the South and his imprisonment at the hands of the North was reminiscent of the South enduring a forced reconstruction. Lee dedicated a whole two pages to describe Jefferson Davis’s life after the war where he was treated with “inhuman cruelty...the privations and indignities heaped upon him, in addition to the mental anguish occasioned by the downfall of the Confederacy he loved so well...brought him to the verge of the grave.”¹¹² This mistreatment of Davis and the idea that he suffered for the whole South was a common theme during Reconstruction. One historian asserted that “Davis symbolized the essential nobility of the defeated cause as well as the suffering it had brought in

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 475.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 475

¹¹² Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 536-537.

its wake.”¹¹³ Lee exemplified this narrative in her description of his horrible treatment at the hands of the North.

The idea of black tyranny during Reconstruction complicated the doctrine of white supremacy. Lee easily circumvented this contradiction by emphasizing the confusion and helplessness of African Americans after emancipation and how Northern politicians took advantage of this to manipulate them into supporting Republican initiatives. She concluded that “the negroes, who, in the main, had been loyal to their master and faithful to their duties while the war lasted, were almost all of them utterly demoralized and for a time, at least, rendered worthless by their sudden and violent emancipation.”¹¹⁴ Not only did this erase and distort black resistance through the war effort and during slavery, it also propagated the faithful slave narrative, an integral part of the romanticized Old South and the Lost Cause. One historian concluded that “virtually all major spokespersons for the Lost Cause could not develop their story of a heroic, victimized South without the image of faithful slaves and benevolent masters.”¹¹⁵ It did not exist in Stephens’s text as it did not gain momentum until later in the 1890s when the Lost Cause was revitalized. In the 1870s, the focus was more on the politics of the war, and not as the romanticization of the Old South.

Lee described the Northern manipulation of black voters in sections titled “Oppression of Reconstructed Governments,”¹¹⁶ “Offices filled by Carpet-baggers and Negroes,”¹¹⁷ “Evils Increased by Freedmen’s Bureau,”¹¹⁸ and “Oppression and Tyranny.”¹¹⁹ These titles demonstrated her preoccupation with this oppression narrative. The sections were full of

¹¹³ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 122.

¹¹⁴ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 539.

¹¹⁵ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 260.

¹¹⁶ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 549

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 550.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 552.

descriptions such as “knowing the character of the negroes, and dreading the evils which were apt to result from their sudden freedom and release from all restraint,”¹²⁰ “the Southern legislatures had given great offense by their [Freedmen’s Bureau’s] attempts to control the negroes in any way,”¹²¹ “they [carpet-baggers] gained ascendancy over the ignorant, inexperienced, credulous negroes by flattery and cajolement,”¹²² “mongrel legislatures,”¹²³ and “the newly admitted Southern States were in possession of negro voters led like sheep by Republican emissaries.”¹²⁴ This imagery reflected the dominance of white supremacy and the belief in the inability of African Americans to function outside of slavery without being controlled by Northern carpet-baggers.

After these accounts, Lee continued with sections describing the creation and the essential nature of the Ku Klux Klan.¹²⁵ Both Stephens and Lee believed wholeheartedly in the necessity of the KKK to free the South from African Americans and Northern oppression. One historian validated this by affirming that “nothing...caused more spirited defense or aggressive evasion than the role of the Klan and violence in the white South’s overthrow of Reconstruction.”¹²⁶ Lee’s white supremacy appeared numerous times in her textbooks. She declared that:

One of the exhibitions of independence in which the colored people most delighted, was to take possession of the whole sidewalk in the towns and force the whites into the gutters or the mud. To avoid unpleasant collusions, white women and children, and the most peaceable among the men stepped aside into the mud or dust, and quietly passed by. If, as sometimes happened, a white man asserted his right to a part of the pavement, and thereby jostled against the negroes, he was liable to be summoned to answer a charge of ‘assault’ before the Bureau officer.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Ibid., 542.

¹²¹ Ibid., 542.

¹²² Ibid., 546.

¹²³ Ibid., 548.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 551.

¹²⁶ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 111.

¹²⁷ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 550.

This account embodied racial tensions and conflicts that existed during Reconstruction and fueled the KKK. Lee blamed the Loyal or Lincoln Leagues, which “violent harangues incited the negroes to manifestations of hostility and under their influence outrages were committed too horrible to be described.”¹²⁸ With this narrative, the KKK formed for “self-protection”¹²⁹ and to “[protect] white women and defenseless families.”¹³⁰ She concluded that “it was impossible for a high-spirited, courageous people to submit patiently to such a course of outrages and indignities from the negroes.”¹³¹ This kind of discourse, acceptable in a school textbook, perpetuated the Lost Cause narrative and white supremacy. The suffering of the South was put forth as an excuse for white control and dominance over Northern and black tyranny. Lee ended the chapter with a nod to Southern victimhood with the statement: “the evil consequences to the whole of the Union of the lawless exercise of despotic power, the disregard of moral obligations, and the greed for wealth which trampled upon all honor and honesty, have been long and lasting.”¹³² Southern victimhood transformed into victory with the overthrow of Reconstruction in 1877. Southern redemption “by regaining home rule, defeating black equality, and throwing off all vestiges of Reconstruction,” restored the honor and righteousness of the South.¹³³ Lee’s textbook perpetuated this view and vital tenet in the revitalized Lost Cause of the 1890s.

Prison Narratives

There were thousands of prisoners taken in the war and cruelty and neglect existed on both sides. The grim memories of imprisonment often countered the move towards

¹²⁸ Ibid., 550-551.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 551.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 552.

¹³¹ Ibid., 551.

¹³² Ibid., 554.

¹³³ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 264.

reconciliation. They undermined the view of the South as a victim in the war, and therefore, the Lost Cause. One historian asserted that “no wartime experience...caused deeper emotions, recriminations, and lasting invective than that of prisons.”¹³⁴ The high death toll, brutality, and neglect in wartime prisons created an unwanted narrative. Those memories “left a legacy of blame and victimization that not even the highly organized and sentimentalized reminiscence industry of the 1880s and 1890s could efface.”¹³⁵ Stephens and Lee openly interacted with these prison narratives. Their writings of prisons and wartime exchanges came from a defensive position as they both outlined the efforts of the South to exchange prisoners and blamed the North for refusing. In similar pattern, Stephens focused more on numerical evidence while Lee was emotive and descriptive.

According to Stephens, the Confederacy wanted to exchange prisoners since the start of the war. He declared that “Mr. Davis had made repeated and earnest efforts...Every proposition of this sort made by him had been refused.”¹³⁶ Stephens’s mention of prison exchanges attempted to disprove Northern prison narratives. He later pushed the blame entirely on the North:

In reference to the treatment of prisoners on the respective sides, about which much was said at the time, two facts are worthy of note: one is, that the Confederates were ever anxious for a speedy exchange, which the Federals would not agree to; the other is, that of the 270,000 Federal prisoners taken, 22,576 died in Confederate hands; and of the 220,000 Confederates taken by the Federals, 26,436 died in their hands: the mortuary tabled thus exhibiting a large per cent in favor of Confederate humanity.¹³⁷

Stephens outlined the death experienced on both sides (although providing no evidence for where he got them): 8.36% of Federals captured died in Confederate prisons, and 12% of

¹³⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 153.

¹³⁶ Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 435-436.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 467.

Confederates imprisoned died in Federal prisons. These numbers seem to prove that the South suffered far more than the North, restoring its status as the victim of the war. It is unlikely that Stephens took into account that the Confederacy ordered the death of all captured African American soldiers and their white officers and therefore took no prisoners.

Lee agreed with Stephens and in an attempt to remove blame from the South, argued that the “Confederate Government was desirous that all prisoners should be released at once either by exchange or parole.”¹³⁸ She continued, “the North, with ample resources to provide for its armies and its captives, rarely permitted exchanges, and congregated the Southern prisoners... where hardship, privation, and cruelty either tortured or destroyed them.”¹³⁹ Lee claimed preeminence to prison narratives of suffering and hardship, like Stephens, with the assertion that the South’s prisoners suffered more than the North’s. To further discount Union soldiers’ accounts of starvation and neglect, she concluded that the Union prisoners in the South “had as much, sometimes more than did the soldiers in the field, and their huts and barracks were better than the brush arbors and dug-outs and the hard ground which formed the quarters of their hungry, ill-clad, but brave captors.”¹⁴⁰ Not only did this discredit Union prison memories, it shifted the focus back to the hardship endured by the Confederate soldiers and emphasized the moral superiority of the Confederacy. As Lee remarkably asserted, Confederate soldiers often went without so that their enemies would not suffer. Stephens and Lee attempted to do this with varying levels of success, but their attempts to argue against prison narratives proved their importance in the postwar debate.

The Faithful Slave

¹³⁸ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 439.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The final tenet of the 1890s-evolved Lost Cause ideology was the faithful slave narrative. This myth contended that slaves tried to protect or save their masters during the war. While this act of protection could have occurred, it ignored the myriad ways that the enslaved fought for their freedom and rebelled under slavery. This image of the faithful slave portrayed slavery as a positive good. It was greatly perpetuated by the new Lost Cause that was organized and made official by the UDC and UCV. The myth was further encouraged by the mass publication of “a popular literature that embraced the romance of the Lost Cause, the idyll of the Old South’s plantations world of orderly and happy race relations, and the mutuality of the ‘soldiers’ faith.”¹⁴¹ Here, the two foundations that supported the faithful slave myth were visible: the romanticized Old South during the 1890s and the intensified racial dynamics of the post-Civil War era.

Stephens and Lee interacted with this narrative in varying degrees. Stephens’s singular attempt to expunge Southern blame for slavery was with the assertion that “Massachusetts was only a few years behind Virginia in the introduction, within the English settlements on this continent, of this unfortunate race as slaves.”¹⁴² His other protests against the end of slavery were based off the unconstitutionality and the aggression of the abolitionists. In contrast, Lee wrote numerous defenses of slavery and the South. Lee was quick to blame Spain for bringing slavery to the new world,¹⁴³ followed by the Dutch for the first cargo of enslaved Africans to Virginia in 1619.¹⁴⁴ She had two main arguments for the institution of slavery; it was not possible to remove it without greater harm and that slavery was a positive good.

¹⁴¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 211.

¹⁴² Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States*, 59.

¹⁴³ Lee, *A School History of the United States*, 29.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

Lee believed whole-heartedly that emancipation was a dangerous endeavor; “France had made the experiment of setting them free in Hayti, and they had proven so degraded and idle and vicious.”¹⁴⁵ Lee again ignored the existence of slave resistance as France did not “set their slaves free” as much as they rebelled and conquered Hati. This certainty of danger appeared numerous times, usually paired with the association that Southerners tried in the past to remove slavery in order to lessen the South’s responsibility.¹⁴⁶ Lee pointed out that slavery existed everywhere in the colonies but became less profitable in the North as “the African...found the occupation [in the South] suited to his health and capacities while he dwindled and was comparatively useless when exposed to the long, cold northern winters.”¹⁴⁷ This belief was common during this period and often used to justify slavery and explain why the South used slaves. Lee’s attempt to rewrite this past and portray previous slaveholders in a good light reflected her effort to defend slavery or at the very least, excuse it to alleviate the Southern blame for the war. To further this argument, Lee concluded that “but for this [Northern] interference, the Southern States would most probably have taken the steps to rid themselves of slavery...but their indignation was aroused.”¹⁴⁸ This is an extraordinary assertion. Here, she unironically argued that only Southern pride kept slavery existent.

Secondly, Lee maintained that the institution of slavery was a positive good for society. In two sections, she outlined how slavery was not “forbidden in the Bible,”¹⁴⁹ “the negroes in bondage were the best clothed, best fed, best cared for, and happiest class of laborers in the world,”¹⁵⁰ and “[Southerners] did consider the bondage in which the negroes were held a

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 279.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 30, 148, 239, 279, 315.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 87-88.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 315.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 279.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

hardship or wrong to them, as they were fed, clothed, lodged, and cared for, better than any other menial class on the globe.”¹⁵¹ Notably these two sections are separated, one after the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and one after war has begun. In this separation, Lee attempted to emphasize at each point of intense controversy the views of the “men so noble and chivalrous and women so pure and gently and true, as were those of the Southern States” who did not believe that slavery was evil, but a positive good.¹⁵² This assertion assumed that abolitionists filled the public mind with “false representations of the wretched conditions of the slaves and accounts of the cruelty of their masters.”¹⁵³ To further this narrative of a beneficial arrangement, Lee asserted:

Under its influence they saw hundreds of thousands of African savages civilized and Christianized; and many of them thought it the greatest missionary agent the world had ever known. the kindest and most affectionate relations existed between the slaves and their owners. A cruel or neglectful master or mistress was rarely found.¹⁵⁴

This is a powerful, explicit endorsement of slavery. At the end of the section, she distanced herself from this by saying, “I am not apologizing for slavery nor defending it. I am telling you how the noble-minded, patriotic, religious people of the South looked on it in 1861.”¹⁵⁵ It was necessary for Lee to distance herself from her obvious Confederate bias in order to portray her textbook as neutral in the discussion of the issue. This type of justification of slavery and portrayal as a beneficial institution, demonstrated in Lee’s textbook, formed the faithful slave narrative that was so popular in the public imagination of the Old South.

Conclusion

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 359.

¹⁵² Ibid., 315.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 289.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 359.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

The Lost Cause blossomed out of the physical destruction, trauma, and humiliation of the South in the Civil War. We are able to see the changes throughout the movement fossilized in Stephens's and Lee's texts. It first formed during Reconstruction, demonstrated in Stephens's textbook. Through Lee's writing, we are able to see the movement explode, revitalized, into national memory during the 1890s, a time of economic overturn, social change, and anxiety. The contrasts embodied in Stephens' and Lee's portrayal of history demonstrate that the Lost Cause formed in its different forms in reaction to differing social, economic, and racial anxiety in the 1870s and 1890s. The Lost Cause and reconciliation after the war merged into the national memory and was perpetuated both in the South *and* in the North. The UDC and UCV were largely successful in this instance, but there were dissenters. Though the Lost Cause was dominant in the national history and popular imagination, there were dedicated African American historians, intellectuals, and neo-abolitionists who struggled to have their version of history heard. In the next chapter, I will examine one such historian, Thomas Higginson, and his portrayal of the abolitionist history of slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction through *A Young Folk's History of the United States*.

Chapter Two: Northern Reconciliation and Accommodation

After the brief dream of racial equality during Reconstruction, white supremacy surged back into power, leading to increasingly harsh black legal codes at the start of the Jim Crow era. During the 1890s' Lost Cause revitalization, where were the abolitionists who had fought tooth and sword for the destruction of slavery? Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey tried to answer this question with her examination of abolitionists autobiographies after the war. She found that abolitionists attempted to influence the national narrative and written history by adding their own stories to the mix.¹⁵⁶ Although she was meticulous in her analysis of abolitionist autobiographies, she did not pay enough attention to the crucial avenue of school textbooks.

As established in the last chapter, the Southern Lost Cause organizations aggressively targeted schools to ensure the right textbooks were chosen for classrooms. Abolitionists, who often had trouble securing major publishing houses, suffered from a lack of organization; all of the antislavery societies disbanded in the decade after the war.¹⁵⁷ Many of these groups disbanded as a result of the abolitionists' differing missions and beliefs. While these ideals hadn't divided the groups during the war, they soon proved to be too difficult to overcome. Some abolitionists wanted only to end slavery and did not believe in racial equality. Some believed in civil equality but not racial equality and still others believed in racial, civil, and economic equality. Many abolitionists believed that their job was over once slavery was abolished and the Fifteenth Amendment was passed. When the antislavery societies disbanded, abolitionists and neo-abolitionists lost a platform from which they could safeguard black rights and control the national narrative to determine how the war and their role were remembered.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson became a well-known figure after the war and still was able to wield influence with which to champion his ideal. In this chapter, I will examine *Young Folks' History of the United States*, a popular Northern 1891 textbook written by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an abolitionist, officer of the first federally authorized regiment of black soldiers, and successful writer. Higginson's textbook denounced slavery and the South as rebels and yet portrayed Reconstruction as peaceful, with no mention of the abuses Southern African Americans endured. After the war and especially after the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, Higginson embraced reconciliation. This reconciliationist mindset was common in many abolitionists who believed that the Constitution would protect African Americans in the South. Higginson's focus on reconciliation after the war allowed certain ideas of the Lost Cause to go unchecked and unchallenged. In his textbook, I will be paying specific attention to his portrayal of slavery, history of abolition, the war, and Reconstruction.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson: "The War Horse of the Younger Abolitionists"¹⁵⁹

Higginson was a pure activist at heart. As a child, he wrote in his diary that he vowed to "never be intimidated against opening my eyes or my mouth"¹⁶⁰ and that he "[could not] remain in the background."¹⁶¹ Although he championed many causes, slavery was the one to which he dedicated the most significant portion of his life.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1823, Thomas Wentworth Higginson was a rich, white, well-educated elite. He was from a distinguished line, stretching back to Reverend Francis Higginson, who led the first party into Salem in 1629—a fact he claimed proudly in his

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 136.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, ed. Howard N. Meyer (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2000), 6-7.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 9.

autobiography, *Cheerful Yesterdays*.¹⁶² After his father died when he was nine, his family underwent great hardship. However, his mother and aunt, both well-educated women, rose to the challenge and raised Higginson. After first enrolling at Harvard at the age of thirteen, Higginson later went back, acquired a theology degree, and served as a minister.

Higginson's early education and upbringing exposed him to abolitionist ideals early in his life. In *Cheerful Yesterdays*, he stated:

I remember to have asked my aunt why my uncle in Virginia did not free his slaves. She replied that they loved him, and would be sorry to be free. This did not satisfy me; but on my afterward visiting the Virginia plantation, there was nothing to suggest anything undesirable... my only glimpse of the other side was from overhearing conversation between the overseer and his friends, in which all the domestic relations of the negroes were spoken of precisely as if they had been animals.¹⁶³

This early encounter exposed Higginson to slavery and its often-hidden realities, kickstarting his first career as an abolitionist. He formed a Boston-based Vigilance Committee whose only mission was to try to free captured fugitive slaves.¹⁶⁴ His beliefs were not without consequences. On several occasions, Higginson was clubbed by the police or arrested during these attempts.¹⁶⁵

Higginson put his militant abolitionist beliefs into action, becoming heavily involved with the Bleeding Kansas. Through his dealing with Kansas, Higginson met John Brown. Higginson was very taken with Brown, calling him "high-minded, unselfish"¹⁶⁶ and recounting that even his enemies were impressed by him.¹⁶⁷ Higginson was so dazzled by Brown that he became one of the Secret Six who financed Brown's raid into Harpers Ferry. After Brown was captured, Higginson was the only member not to flee or disown Brown, despite his name being released in

¹⁶² Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1898), 4.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

¹⁶⁴ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 12.

¹⁶⁵ Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, 154, 160.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1891), 288.

connection to Brown.¹⁶⁸ Higginson's strong moral belief in the necessity of abolition served him well in the Civil War. It was during the war that he became the colonel of the First South Carolina Volunteers, the first federally authorized black regiment made up of all escaped slaves. The more he interacted with the escaped slaves who formed his regiment, the more his hatred of slavery increased. In *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, he described seeing a slave prison and the torture devices in it:

A machine so contrived that a person once imprisoned in it could neither sit, stand, nor lie, but must support the body half raised, in a position scarcely endurable...I remember the unutterable loathing with which I leaned against the door of that prison-house; I had thought myself seasoned to any conceivable horrors of slavery, but it seemed as if the visible presence of that den of sin would choke me. Of course it would have been burned to the ground by us, but that this would have involved the sacrifice of every other building and all the piles of lumber; yet for the moment it seemed as if the sacrifice would be righteous.¹⁶⁹

His experiences during the war seeing firsthand the horrors of slavery and his interactions with his troops further cemented Higginson's hatred for slavery.

After the war, Higginson enjoyed a very successful literary career, with over twenty published works. Writing was very important to Higginson; historian Howard N. Meyer called Higginson "primarily a writer."¹⁷⁰ *Young Folks' History of the United States*, published in 1891, was Higginson's most successful work and by his own estimate, sold nearly two hundred thousand copies.¹⁷¹ It was adopted by many school districts and was said to have led to an improved style of historical writing.¹⁷² In this chapter, I will compare it to the bias seen in Stephens's and Lee's textbooks. I will also use Higginson's autobiography, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, and his book, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, for contextualization.

¹⁶⁸ Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, 224.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1870), 119.

¹⁷⁰ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 31.

¹⁷¹ Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, 186.

¹⁷² Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 32.

The Unexpected Reconciliationist

When I chose Higginson's textbook, I expected him to have a more radical alternative perspective that reflected his life as an abolitionist and an officer of a black regiment. Instead, his textbook was more complex, as multifaceted as the author himself. Historians have argued about how faithful Higginson was to the abolitionist cause considering his role during and after the war. While Higginson's views on African American rights, as revealed by his textbook, may seem contradictory, they were consistent with the nineteenth century attitudes on race.

Jeffrey implied that Higginson was not a dedicated abolitionist and was more about the adventure. She called his abolitionist career "relatively short" and accused him of not having a true devotion to the black cause.¹⁷³ In Higginson's defense, Jeffrey's criteria of "true devotion"—believing in and fighting for black equality after the war—would disqualify many abolitionists. Furthermore, racism was rampant among abolitionists in the nineteenth century. Even Garrison, one of the most arguably well-known abolitionists, wrote that "it would be absurd to pretend that as a class they [African Americans] maintain a high character."¹⁷⁴ Historian George M. Fredrickson stated that romantic racialism was quite prevalent among abolitionists; "benevolent reformers tended to see the Negro more as a symbol than as a person, more as a vehicle for romantic social criticism than as a human being with the normal range of virtues and vices."¹⁷⁵ Higginson fell victim to this as well, but almost all abolitionists believed that victory was achieved with the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment. Jeffrey pointed to this

¹⁷³ Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 249.

¹⁷⁴ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 36.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

optimistic belief when discussing the reasons all the antislavery organizations disbanded after the war.¹⁷⁶

After the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, Higginson, like many other abolitionists, withdrew from trying to interfere with the South's affairs. He naively believed that the amendments would safeguard Southern blacks and failed to act when it became clear that they would not.¹⁷⁷ After the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, Higginson turned his focus to several other social movements such as women's rights, the poor, corruption in the government, and anti-imperialism. He did continue to write and protest Southern abuses in the 1890s, but as he aged he withdrew from active engagement.¹⁷⁸ He was aware of and wrote against the tenets of the Lost Cause, as seen by his letter to the *The Nation* magazine, protesting a book by Thomas Nelson Page. Page was responsible for popularizing the Lost Cause through his fiction stories that portrayed a romanticized Old South, including the faithful slave myth.

Despite his apparent awareness of the South's failure to follow the Constitution, Higginson did not mention it in his textbook. There are several possible reasons: he was writing a book specifically for young folks and did not want to expose them to current controversy; he did not want to portray the Reconstruction as a failure; or he wanted to focus on peace and believed that everything will work out. Nevertheless, his inability to address this issue allowed the Lost Cause to go unchecked.

Though he focused on reconciliation after the war, Higginson did challenge the Lost Cause in its portrayal of slavery and the Civil War. He fought against the popularity of the Lost Cause and tried to reestablish the national narrative as one that saw slavery as the evil that it was and the

¹⁷⁶ Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist*, 34.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

South as a rebel. Higginson's portrayal of slavery was in stark contrast to Lee and Stephens's accounts, which mainly ignored it or preached its benefits. While the rest of the country erased the history of abolition after the war, Higginson attempted to immortalize the important role that abolitionists played before the Civil War. Higginson responded to many of the claims that Lee made in her portrayal of Lost Cause history. While Higginson most likely did not read Lee's textbook, he was unquestionably aware of the Lost Cause which was prominent in the public and private sphere in the postwar era. After the war, Higginson retreated from his aggressive portrayal of the South and instead took on a mindset of reconciliation; he did not mention any of the controversies or civil unrest and atrocities committed by the Ku Klux Klan.

The History of Abolition

The dominant national narrative concerning abolition during the 1890s was one that either viewed abolitionists as "Agitators" and fanatics or as obstacles to achieving reconciliation. This characterization prevailed because many believed that in order to reunite the nation, the divisive issues of slavery and race had to be pushed out of sight and out of mind. With the removal of slavery in war remembrance, abolitionism also faded out of the foreground. Historian Blight stated that "the rhetoric and reality of emancipation and racial equality occupied only the margins of history."¹⁷⁹ While the bravery of the Blue and Gray soldiers was celebrated, the abolitionist warriors who fought amid danger and scorn for decades in the North were relegated to the sidelines and for the most part, forgotten. Jeffrey stated that the final gatherings of the antislavery societies revealed the "terrible recognition that [their] achievements had been undercut by subsequent events and by the persistence of race prejudice."¹⁸⁰ Higginson and other

¹⁷⁹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 191-192.

¹⁸⁰ Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 215.

abolitionists fought against this trend; they thought that their actions deserved recognition and praise. Higginson mounted this defense in his textbook by establishing slavery as nefarious institution and recognizing the contributions of abolitionists made to the emancipation effort. Unfortunately, Higginson's hyper focus on the role of white abolitionists diminished the role played by African Americans, free or fugitive, in claiming their own freedom.

The Evils of Slavery

As we have seen, Stephens and Lee fought vehemently against the belief that slavery was evil. In his textbook, Higginson established slavery as wrong not only because he vehemently believed it, but also as it was fundamental to the legitimization of abolitionists as heroes and moral warriors. Higginson was not as aggressive in his blame of the Southern states for slavery as Lee and Stephens were in blaming the North in the attempt to lessen the South's responsibility. When Higginson said something negative about slavery and the South, he then qualified it with something good, demonstrating his efforts at reconciliation. Of Virginia, Higginson stated that "the existence of slavery among them caused much ignorance and idleness, as the wisest Virginians admitted; but there were many men of high character and energy" and goes on to praise Virginia for its leading role in the American Revolution.¹⁸¹ He did the same with North and South Carolina as he declared that "personal freedom was not valued so highly in the colony; and negro slaves were introduced from Barbadoes in 1665. Except in this respect the colony prospered for a long time."¹⁸² Here, Higginson described the negative impact of slavery, but did not focus on it.

Higginson continued in this vein of non-accusation in his clearing of the Founding Fathers of blame, by stating that "when the Constitution was formed, it was supposed that slavery was a

¹⁸¹ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 120.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 126.

thing that would soon die out...But this proved to be a great mistake.”¹⁸³ Although, there was some implicit criticism, he made no mention of the three-fifths compromise and glided over the arguments over slavery between the delegates of the convention. One possible reason could be that Higginson wanted to present the United States as a unified nation.

Higginson attempted to be impartial. When he discussed the political disputes during the Missouri Compromise, he stated the pros and cons of slavery, which Lee and Stephens never did. Higginson did list more of the negatives of slavery, but only by one more. When the compromise was decided, Higginson condoned it by stating the compromise allowed slavery to grow:

like compromises of principle generally, it only postponed the evil day. At the time of that agreement, slavery was comparatively weak, and might have been abolished, or at least restricted by the nation. By letting it grow, it was allowed to reach such power, that it required for its abolition a great civil war, and the lives of many thousand men.¹⁸⁴

Here, he placed the blame of the war and life lost on the politicians and Southerners who did not prevent the growth of slavery. Higginson also criticized lawmakers for their weakness; “in spite of the law, however, slaves were secretly imported for many years... the slave trade between the States of the American Union, not being prohibited by law, lasted till American slavery itself was abolished.”¹⁸⁵ In these passages, Higginson portrayed slavery as evil and put the blame on the entire United States rather than purely the Northern states and abolitionists, a tactic attempted by Lee and Stephens.

Abolitionist and Black History

For the majority of his book, when Higginson talked about black history, including fugitive slaves and slave rebellions, he described black history through the perspective of abolitionist history with white abolitionists in the foreground as the main agents for freedom. While

¹⁸³ Ibid., 254.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 256.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 240.

Higginson dedicated over a page delineating particular abolitionists's contributions to the antislavery movement, he did not give credit to African Americans for playing any significant role in the fight for their emancipation. Higginson described William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*, as causing "great excitement all over the country."¹⁸⁶ Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia was mentioned after this, but only in relation to Garrison; Higginson stated that "Mr. Garrison was opposed to this, and to all war and to all bloodshed; but the insurrection was, nevertheless, attributed to his teachings. Turner was at last arrested, tried, and executed."¹⁸⁷ Higginson went on to describe how Garrison founded the New England antislavery society. The only detail of Nat Turner's rebellion was that they "went house to house, putting whole families to death."¹⁸⁸ This was a negative, graphic portrayal of the insurrection. Higginson quickly stipulated that Garrison did not support this, as if to make sure there was no negative taint put on Garrison. This account set the tone for how Higginson portrayed enslaved peoples' interactions with abolitionists. He continued these observations in his record of John Brown.

As mentioned earlier, Higginson was a supporter of Brown's expedition. In his textbook, he compared Brown and George Washington in their plans of actions, coming down favorably on Brown. According to Higginson, at Brown's trial, Virginia Governor Wise stated that "he is a man of clear head, of courage, fortitude, and simple ingenuousness.... He inspired me with great confidence in his integrity as a man of truth."¹⁸⁹ He also highlighted that Brown's last act was "to kiss the forehead of a little slave-child, on the way to the place of execution."¹⁹⁰ This description was excessive to the point of deification. Brown became a symbol; Higginson described Brown

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 264.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 265.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 265.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 288.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 288.

and other abolitionists as martyrs to the cause. He identified Garrison and Brown as important to the abolitionist movement, but he never mentioned Frederick Douglass, arguably one of the most important men in the nineteenth century. Higginson's focus was exclusively on white abolitionists.

Higginson gave many accounts of fugitive slaves. All but one of the fugitive slaves were rescued by white abolitionists. He describes how a "slave child named Med" was freed by the Supreme Court of the State of Massachusetts;¹⁹¹ in New York a "fugitive named Jerry was rescued by force from the government officers;"¹⁹² "one named Shadrach was rescued" in Boston;¹⁹³ there was an attempt to free Anthony Burns where "one man was killed in this last attempt; and troops were ordered to aid in the surrender of the alleged slave."¹⁹⁴ Interestingly enough, Higginson took part in this attempt to free Burns, which he described in his autobiography. However, even in this description, like the other accounts in his text, Higginson used passive voice. While he tried to establish the abolitionists as crucial emancipators, instead of the enslaved themselves, he did not seek excessive praise for his actions and only acknowledged the white abolitionists as the leaders and warriors of the movement. In *Cheerful Yesterdays*, Higginson provided more details of various attempts he participated in to free fugitive slaves, but still followed the formulaic way of only describing them in relation to himself or other abolitionists. It could be argued that the reason Higginson wrote from this perspective was because it is the only one that he had. However, he still placed himself in the role of protector or savior and did not acknowledge the intense struggle it took for the enslaved to make it to the North.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 268.

¹⁹² Ibid., 281.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Higginson also recorded the trials and struggles that the abolitionists undertook in the hostile North. He did not dedicate a specific section to this topic, as he did not seek praise, but slipped in mentions throughout his textbook. He described how Garrison was dragged through the streets by a rope around his body, how Reverend Elijah P. Lovejoy, an editor of an antislavery newspaper, was beaten to death by a mob, and how houses, schools, and meeting centers of antislavery societies were burned to the ground.¹⁹⁵ Higginson described these events to ensure that the North's history of opposing abolition was not lost in the rebranding of the North as the great emancipator after the war. Jeffrey described how abolitionist Samuel J. May did the same in his autobiography, as he

clearly understood the dangers of forgetting northern moral responsibility for the perpetuation of slavery distorting the historical record and the role abolitionists had played ending it. Because northerners supported slavery, abolitionists had faced social ostracism, persecution, and even death. Their courage and heroism in the face of northern hostility deserved to be remembered.¹⁹⁶

This opinion was common among abolitionists, but their voices were washed away in the flood of reconciliation and Lost Cause sentiment as the nation moved to hide or forget the real reason for the war—slavery—in an effort to cover up racial inequities and tensions. Higginson focused on establishing abolitionists's role in emancipation, but in giving all the credit to white abolitionists, he erased the heroic efforts of African Americans to regain their freedom in a hostile white United States.

The War of Rebellion

The major difference between Stephens's, Lee's, and Higginson's accounts of the war was the time spent discussing it. For Stephens and Lee, the Civil War—the War of Northern Aggression or the War Between the States—was crucial to their identities as Southerners and to

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 268.

¹⁹⁶ Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 27.

the history of the South. Lost Cause ideology was established by the mythology, glorification of the war and its soldiers, and the suffering of the southern people. Higginson remarked in his preface that he deliberately gave “less space than usual...to the events of war, and more to the affairs of peace.”¹⁹⁷ He continued that “the statistics of sieges and battles are of little value, and are apt to make us forget that the true glory of a nation lies, after all, in orderly progress.”¹⁹⁸ This focus was radically different from the approaches of Lee and Stephens, and it can be argued that Higginson’s statement came with an arrogance of victory. He does not feel the need to rehash statistics because the North won.

As previously demonstrated, Lee dedicated an extraordinary thirty-one percent¹⁹⁹ and Stephens a smaller ten percent²⁰⁰ of their textbooks on the war. Higginson followed Stephens’s trend, dedicating only seven percent of his book to the Civil War and keeping his promise of using the space to instead focus on times of peace. That Higginson and Stephens spent a similar amount of space highlights how much Lee saw the war as the most important part of Southern history. Higginson did not need to spend a significant period of time on the Civil War as the North won. Therefore, its cause and conduct were legitimized by victory.

Not only did Higginson spend fewer pages on the war, but the pages that are included have a distinctive lack of quantitative analysis in Higginson’s descriptions of battles. As stated in the preface, Higginson believed statistics to be of little importance. Of all battles described by Higginson, he only included death counts for two – Gettysburg and Antietam – and both numbers were rounded, unlike the exact numbers that Lee and Stephens gave for almost every

¹⁹⁷ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, iii.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, iv.

¹⁹⁹ L Susan Pendleton Lee, *A School History of the United States* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1895), 346-538.

²⁰⁰ Alexander H. Stephens, *A Compendium of the History of the United States* (New York: E. J. Hale & Son Publishers, 1872), 418-468.

battle. For, Lee and Stephens, statistics were vital to build the case for how the South was overwhelmingly outnumbered by the North. This difference again highlights the varying levels of importance that the Northern and Southern authors put on the war and why the war was won.

The Southern States in Rebellion: The Start of the Civil War

Unlike Lee and Stephens, Higginson explicitly stated that the war was started by the South. Higginson declared that the firing on Fort Sumter “aroused and excited the whole nation; and many who had before expressed much sympathy for the supporters of slavery now took sides with those who wished to preserve the Union.”²⁰¹ Both Lee and Stephens acknowledged that the North gained a lot of wrongful support after Fort Sumter, though they attributed it to the abolitionists inflaming the minds of the North against them. Higginson attempted to defy the Southern myth of unity as he argued that there were many in Southern white society who opposed disunion, but they “were, in most cases, gradually silenced or driven away” by secessionists.²⁰² He mentioned that “in all these States, the colored population took sides unanimately with the Union; but, being composed almost wholly of unarmed and ignorant slaves, they counted at first for little.”²⁰³ Here, Higginson dismantled the myth of Southern unity in rebellion that both Stephens and Lee cultivated. Unlike Lee and Stephens, who stipulated that only whites could be true Southerners, Higginson acknowledged the enslaved people in the South as Southerners. He also hinted at the enslaved peoples’ role as soldiers and supporters of the Union Army, which again, contradicted the myth of the faithful slave that was fundamental to the Lost Cause.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 291.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Higginson challenged Southern victimization by depicting Fort Sumter as evidence of Southern aggression and preparedness for war. Higginson stated that “few really believed that there was to be any serious fighting... and, when the attack came, they were quite taken by surprise...they were still unprepared.”²⁰⁴ He continued, stating that not only was the North unprepared, but there were instances of sabotage: “Mr. Buchanan’s secretary of war, himself a secessionist, had sent several hundred thousand muskets to Southern arsenals, and left the Northern arsenals almost bare. It was the same with the cannon and ammunition.”²⁰⁵ This account by Higginson undermined the supposed helplessness of the South that Lee especially cultivated in her textbook.

Higginson acknowledged that the war was not originally fought to end slavery, but to preserve the Union. Despite this, it was apparent to Higginson that the South only seceded in order to protect slavery, not states’ rights. He stated later that “so far as the object of the secessionists was to retain possession of their slaves, no excuse is to be made for them, except that the Union Government did not itself order the emancipation of the slaves until compelled to it by military necessity.”²⁰⁶ Here, he pointed out the falsehood of hailing the federal government as the great emancipators; it erased the history of the North opposing abolition.

Black Soldiers in the Civil War

That Higginson, unlike Lee and Stephens, wrote about black soldiers in the Union army at all, not to mention multiple times, was significant. Higginson held a unique perspective on black soldiers in the Civil War, courtesy of his service as colonel of the first federally approved black regiment, the First South Carolina Volunteers. James McPherson, in his book *Drawn by the*

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 293.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 295-296.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 319

Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War, used Thomas Wentworth Higginson as an example of abolitionists who did not hold powerful racial prejudices because of their service as officers to black regiments during the war.²⁰⁷ Higginson's view of race was complicated; he still was a product of his time and had undeniable racial prejudices. To understand how Higginson wrote about these men, first it is necessary to examine his personal accounts of his time in the army in his book. Higginson's book, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, will give us a look behind the formal language of textbooks to examine how his experiences influenced the way he wrote about African American soldiers.

*"My Dusky Soldiers"*²⁰⁸

Higginson presented a complicated picture of his understanding of race in his portrayal of the black soldiers in his regiment during the war. On one hand, Higginson was a spokesperson for arming African Americans, advocating for their bravery and skill in battle, discipline, and abilities as soldiers. He declared that "as to the simple general fact of courage and reliability, I think that no officer in our camp ever thought of there being any difference between black and white."²⁰⁹ Notice that he qualified the belief in equality. In terms of soldier quality, Higginson believed that whites and blacks were equal, but he did not believe that they were equals in any other way.

As mentioned earlier, abolitionists were prone to romantic racialism; Higginson is no outlier. He saw African Americans as children; he referred to them as "my young barbarians,"²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ James M. McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 91.

²⁰⁸ Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 337.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 337.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

“omnipresent Ethiopian infancy,”²¹¹ “simple and lovable people,”²¹² their “childish nature,”²¹³ and “these simple children.”²¹⁴ And yet, he praised their abilities as soldiers and their daring escapes from slavery. He affirmed, “there were more than a hundred men in the ranks who had voluntarily met more dangers in their escape from slavery than any of my young captains had incurred in all their lives.”²¹⁵ How did Higginson hold these contradicting beliefs simultaneous?

Fredrickson explained:

This image of innate black docility and inoffensiveness was, as it turned out, too deeply rooted to be demolished by the emergence of the Negro as a soldier. In fact, the potential or actual successes of black troops were often seen as the *result* of their submissiveness—which in a military context could mean the same thing as susceptibility to discipline. Since their units were officered by whites, the alleged willingness of blacks to submit to military rule could also be interpreted as an instinctive sense of racial subordination.²¹⁶

Higginson embodied this argument, stating that his volunteers have a “high standard of drill and discipline,”²¹⁷ in which they “surpass whites,”²¹⁸ “they take readily to drill, and do not object to discipline,”²¹⁹ and that he had “never... beheld such a jolly scene of labor.”²²⁰ Higginson’s views on race did not change drastically during his time leading a black regiment. He was convinced of African American’s ability to be good soldiers, but his understanding of their natural inferiority was not deterred.

His belief in the difference between Southern blacks, who were once enslaved, and the free Northern blacks further complicated his intractable belief in the racial inferiority of African

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 24.

²¹³ Ibid., 70.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 74.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 331.

²¹⁶ Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*, 169.

²¹⁷ Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 4.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²²⁰ Ibid., 19.

Americans. He was worried at first about the character of his men after his experiences with Northern blacks. He stated:

The demeanor of my men to each other is very courteous, and yet I see none of that sort of upstart conceit which is sometimes offensive among free negroes at the North, the dandy-barber strut. This is an agreeable surprise, for I feared that freedom and regimentals might produce precisely that. They seem the world's perpetual children, docile, gay, and lovable, in the midst of this war for freedom on which they have intelligently entered.²²¹

This attitude demonstrates his belief in the legitimacy of racial essentialism. He again accentuated this belief when he compared the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts regiment to his own. He declared that the Fifty-Fourth, made up mostly of free Northern African Americans, was “afflicted with perpetual discontent and desertion”²²² and full of “some of the worst reprobates of Northern cities.”²²³ His preference for the escaped slaves in his own regiment could be because the free Northern blacks fought more for their rights. At the heart of this belief was the idea that African Americans should not try to reach above their place; they should not expect the same treatment as whites. In comparison to his “docile” soldiers, Higginson saw the Northern black soldiers as too assertive and a threat to the racial hierarchy.

Even though Higginson's belief in African American's inferiority was not challenged, he did respect his troops as soldiers. In his textbook, Higginson included all instances where black soldiers were involved in the war effort and victory over the Confederacy. Higginson's belief in the importance of black soldiers was demonstrated by the attention he paid to their accomplishments in his textbook: marking when black regiments were first constructed,²²⁴ the bravery of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts regiment at Fort Wagner,²²⁵ and the occupancy of

²²¹ Ibid., 39-40.

²²² Ibid., 302-303.

²²³ Ibid.,

²²⁴ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 305-306.

²²⁵ Ibid., 310

Richmond by colored troops.²²⁶ While these accounts are few in number, they count for more than Lee or Stephens, who ignored the existence of black soldiers in the Civil War, especially regiments made up of escaped slaves as it contradicted the mythology of the faithful slave in the Lost Cause.

Finally, even though Higginson's view of African American inferiority remained intact after the war, he still fought for further recognition for the role of black soldiers in the Civil War. He went further than Stephens and Lee, but "it was possible to advocate the use of Negro troops and glorify their achievements without giving up the cherished stereotype of black submissiveness and docility in the presence of 'superior' whites."²²⁷ To a certain extent, he both fought against racial stereotypes and perpetuated them simultaneously, reinforcing some aspects of the Lost Cause. Higginson stated that "I cannot conceive what people at the North mean by speaking of the negroes as a bestial or brutal race. Except in some insensibility to animal pain, I never knew of an act in my regiment which I should call brutal."²²⁸ Here, he countered the common stereotype during Reconstruction of black degeneracy or the idea that freedom caused African Americans to regress into beasts, commit criminal behavior and rape white women. Higginson understood the importance of the black soldiers in the Civil War; the success or failure of this experiment could limit or propel antislavery or black rights support. He stated that "till the blacks were armed, there was no guarantee of their freedom. It was their demeanor under arms that shamed the nation into recognizing them as men."²²⁹ Once proven, Higginson never doubted his men's ability as soldier. Unfortunately, his magnanimous trust did not extend to their ability to be hardworking equal citizens during peace.

²²⁶ Ibid., 317.

²²⁷ Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*, 171.

²²⁸ Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 340-341.

²²⁹ Ibid., 359.

The End of the War

In his textbook, Higginson made no mention of the destruction caused by the Union army in the South. When discussing General Sherman's march, there was no mention of the devastation of their pathway through the South, just that his army "subsist[ed] largely on what could be found in the country passed through."²³⁰ This account was a rather great omission especially as the march's destruction was well documented in pictures and newspapers during the time. While Higginson described Confederate raids in the North with a description of General Early's destruction of Chambersburg and the ruin of the American merchant-vessels by Confederate privateers, he omitted any mention of Northern raids. Higginson's record of this ruin differed greatly from Stephens's and Lee's accounts, though they all used similar tactics, emphasizing the other side's brutality and ignoring their own. The Lost Cause was based upon the idea of the South as a victim to Northern aggression and destruction. Higginson's descriptions disproved that representation. Higginson also destroyed Lee's portrayal of the exalted and heroic Jefferson Davis by describing how Davis was found trying to escape "disguised in woman's clothing."²³¹ Accounts of Davis dressed in women's clothing were common and personified the emasculation of surrender; it stripped Davis, a symbol of the Confederacy, of his dignity, manhood, and honor, establishing him as a coward.²³²

Like Stephens and Lee, Higginson engaged in the debate around prison narratives and criticized the Southern treatment of Union prisoners. He declared that "for the cruelties inflicted by the Confederates on Union prisoners during the war no excuse at all is to be made, nor for deeds like the massacre of colored troops at Fort Pillow."²³³ Lee and Stephens insisted that the

²³⁰ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 315.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

²³² Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 26.

²³³ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 319.

Union army was harsher towards its prisoners. It is significant that Higginson included the kill order that the Confederacy had towards African American soldiers and their officers, which Lee and Stephen did not mention. Higginson softened his statement by concluding that “these were, after all, the acts of a few; and the general feeling in both armies, no doubt, that of sincere and manly opponents.”²³⁴ His conclusion at the end of the war marked Higginson’s transition into an emphasis on reconciliation.

Reconciliation

At the end of his section on the war, Higginson’s tone was unmistakably more reconciliatory than the tone of either Stephens or Lee. At the end of his section on the Civil War, Higginson concluded by admiring the bravery and sacrifice of both sides. He declared that the war proved that the “strength, courage, and patriotism of the American people were still as great as in the period of the Revolution. There were few families, North or South, which did not suffer some bereavement during the long contest”²³⁵ and that “each side learned to respect the courage and resources of the other.”²³⁶ With these statements it is clear to see how Higginson embraced reconciliation to an extent that Lee and Stephens never did. Within this conclusion though, Higginson did not stop from some critique of the South, exemplified in this statement:

It was not, indeed, possible that those who had fought for the flag of their country could pay equal honor to those who tried to strike it down. But they could remember that most of these mistaken men had been taught from childhood that their first allegiance was due to their own State, not to the United States; so that they felt themselves loyal, in their own way, even when fighting against their nation. This delusion ended, let us hope, with the war: but it is necessary to remember it in order to do justice to those who fought for the Confederate side.²³⁷

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid., 318.

²³⁶ Ibid., 319.

²³⁷ Ibid.

While Higginson did make some attempt to be fair, this declaration subtly snubbed and ridiculed the South for its delusions. This account would be unacceptable to Lee, Stephens, and other proponents of the Lost Cause. While Higginson was certainly not unbiased in his portrayal of the South, he made more of an effort at reconciliation, unlike Stephens or Lee.

“The Nation was Reunited and was at Peace with all the World”²³⁸

As an ardent advocate for less government interference and for reconciliation once the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, Higginson demonstrated his conservative political leanings through his writing. Historian Michael Les Benedict argued that the so-called “Radical Reconstruction” was actually not very radical. At no point did Republicans call for a permanent expansion of federal power; instead they “stolidly perserv[ed] the states as the primary authors of legislation, firmly refusing to force compliance through exercise of national power.”²³⁹ This belief was not understood during the time period as the conservatives were appalled by the idea of Reconstruction. To them, Reconstruction was extremely radical as they supported restoration and not reconstruction of Southern states. Unsurprisingly, they enjoyed wide popularity in the South and the North and therefore had great political influence.²⁴⁰ Higginson did not support immediate restoration, but he did support the removal of government interference once African American rights were guaranteed constitutionally.

Higginson sailed through the period of Reconstruction without mentioning the controversy, violence, and racial tensions that existed. He did, however, briefly mention the Freedmen’s Bureau, which he defined as “an organization to provide for the loyal and suffering

²³⁸ Ibid., 342.

²³⁹ Michael Les Benedict, “Preserving the Constitution: The Conservative Basis of Radical Reconstruction,” *The Journal of American History* 61, no. 1 (June 1974), 76.

²⁴⁰ Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977), 49.

classes, black or white, of the Southern States.”²⁴¹ This definition either deliberately misconstrued its purpose or ignored it. He did not record the acts of terror and violence committed by the KKK or the 1871 Enforcement Act so hated by Stephens and Lee. Instead, he concluded that “all the seceded States became finally restored to the Union.”²⁴² Higginson’s omission could be an expression of disbelief towards accounts of the violence or an attempt to ignore it to present the image of a whole and restored United States after the Civil War. This was similar to how he avoided mentions of any controversy with the constitutional convention and other important events in order to present a unified image of the United States. After Reconstruction, he declared that “where injustice has been shown toward the colored people, many of them have taken the remedy into their own hands, and have removed into some other states in hopes of better treatment.”²⁴³ This account demonstrated Higginson’s deep belief in self-sufficiency and the importance of federal noninterference in Southern affairs. In *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, he declared that:

If any abuses exist, the remedy is not to be found in federal interference, except in case of actual insurrection, but in the voting power of the blacks, so far as they have strength or skill to assert it and, where that fails, in their power of locomotion. They must leave those countries or States which ill-use them for others which treat them better.²⁴⁴

Higginson advocated for the complete hands-off approach, common in the North, to deal with the racial tensions in the South.

Historian Julie Jeffrey often saw this laissez-faire attitude and optimism in writings of abolitionists after the war. She stated that they argued that “it was time to let southerners solve their own problems. White southerners understood how to manage their blacks, and the region

²⁴¹ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 324.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 326.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 335.

²⁴⁴ Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 386-387.

was more peaceful, prosperous, and tolerant without federal involvement.”²⁴⁵ Higginson affirmed this belief as the “time has gradually diminished the sore feeling between the two races in the Southern States; and these States were never before, on the whole, prosperous and orderly as now.”²⁴⁶ He optimistically believed that the South was improving and that racial tensions were easing. Safely in the North, he received a superficial impression and missed the daily harassments and oppression that still continued underneath the lily-white image of peace. He believed that the constitutional amendments were all that were necessary for peace and equality. This belief was a common one. One historian noted that with the amendments, “which supposedly guaranteed his legal equality, the black man was expected to make his own way and find his ‘true level’ with a minimum of interference and direct assistance.”²⁴⁷ Higginson was not the only one who preferred this hands-off approach; it was copied by many other abolitionists. Nevertheless, this perspective left African Americans in the South to be snarled in the increasingly harsh laws to hinder their freedom and rights, culminating in the Jim Crow era in the 1890s. Higginson’s account of Reconstruction and the following decades demonstrated his lack of commitment to racial equality or safety. His writings of this period also highlighted his reconciliation fervor and his desire for unity in the United States.

Conclusion

Higginson embodied the tangled contradictions that existed in many abolitionists. Before the war, the ideological differences between abolitionists did not matter as they were all united in the goal of emancipation but, after the war, these differences created enough of a barrier that the antislavery societies ended. Many abolitionists were satisfied with the constitutional protection

²⁴⁵ Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember*, 159.

²⁴⁶ Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*, 335.

²⁴⁷ Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*, 197.

for freedmen and women. Higginson exemplified this tendency. He was happy to step back after the Fifteenth Amendment was passed. Abolitionists succeeded in their goal of emancipation but abandoned millions of freed slaves to the mercies of the racist South. Higginson's textbook straddled the line between antislavery, reconciliation, and the Northern perspective, perfectly encapsulating the conflicting narratives in this time period. With his portrayal of a peaceful Reconstruction, he ignored the decades of racial violence and oppression of African Americans in the South. Higginson attempted to challenge the Lost Cause, but in this instance, reinforced it and allowed it to continue unchecked. In my next chapter, I will examine the African American perspective through the 1891 textbook, *A School's History of the Negro Race in America*, by Edward A. Johnson. This book will provide a look into the struggle of African Americans in the post-Civil War era to have their stories be heard.

Chapter Three: We Will Not Be Forgotten: The African American Response to the Lost Cause

In the 1890s, the Lost Cause narrative dominated Southern schools, literature, and society. White society was united against the brief hopes of racial equality that surfaced during Reconstruction. They were determined to restore the racial hierarchy that ensured black oppression. During the 1890s, segregation was codified by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 and the Jim Crow era began.²⁴⁸ This discrimination was especially prominent in education. In the first chapter, we established that the racist Lost Cause ideology saturated popular Southern textbooks. In this chapter, we will examine how African American writers fought against the belief in black degeneracy, challenged Jim Crow laws, and stressed black progress and racial pride.

The Lost Cause narrative that dominated white Southern society was not accepted without staunch resistance from southern African Americans. They did not have a strong presence nor influence in Southern politics because of the descent into Jim Crow. Despite this lack of political or social clout, many fought valiantly to promote an alternate narrative in the South. Edward Austin Johnson was one such faithful, tireless fighters for civil rights. His textbook, *A School History of the Negro Race in America*, was intended to supplement Southern history textbooks, which left African Americans out of national history. Johnson wrote:

During my experience of eleven years as a teacher... I have often observed the sin of omission and commission on the part of white authors, most of whom seem to have written exclusively for white children, and studiously left out the many creditable deeds of the Negro. The general tone of most of the histories taught in our schools has been that of the inferiority of the Negro, whether actually said in so many words, or left to be implied from the highest laudation of the deeds of one race to the complete exclusion of those of the other.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 123.

²⁴⁹ Edward A. Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race in America, from 1619 to 1890*, (Edward A. Johnson, Raleigh, N.C., 1891), iii.

His textbook served as an answer to this problem. Johnson dedicated two hundred pages exclusively to black history for African American children who have “found not one word of credit, not one favorable comment for even one among millions of his foreparents, who have lived through nearly three centuries of his country’s history!”²⁵⁰ *A School History of the Negro Race in America* was written for them.

Edward A. Johnson: “A Life of Unusual Usefulness and Accomplishment”²⁵¹

Johnson was born into slavery in North Carolina in 1860. Not much is known about his early life, but he was taught by a free black woman until he went to Washington High School, one of the first black schools in North Carolina. After graduation, he attended Atlanta University, became a teacher, and eventually, the principal of Washington School. He stayed there for several years before leaving to study law at Shaw University. He was the university’s first graduate and the only one in his class in 1890. With the widespread belief in black degeneracy and emerging Southern Negrophobia in the Jim Crow South, black lawyers struggled to survive in the South.²⁵² Their clients were almost exclusively black. Most southern black lawyers were typically only hired for “almost hopeless criminal matters... [as their clients] turned to white lawyers in the more lucrative civil cases.”²⁵³ Severe discrimination forced many to either stop practicing or move North.

After Johnson graduated from Shaw, he wrote the textbook, *A School History of the Negro Race in America, from 1619 to 1890*. Johnson mailed a copy of his book to his personal friend, Booker T. Washington, urging him to adopt it at the Tuskegee Institute.²⁵⁴ It is unknown

²⁵⁰ Ibid., iv.

²⁵¹ “The Life Works of Edward A. Johnson, *The Crisis*, 81 (April, 1933).

²⁵² J. Clay Smith, *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-1944* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 3.

²⁵³ Ibid., 4.

²⁵⁴ Stephen G. Hall, *A Faithful Account of the Race: African American Historical Writing in Nineteenth Century America*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 285-286.

whether Washington included it in the curriculum at his school, but he did send it to Edward Atkinson, a Boston industrialist, which suggests that he endorsed it. Booker T. Washington and Johnson shared similar philosophies. Like Washington, Johnson tended to lean more towards an accommodationist perspective when he spoke of the post-Civil War era. Washington and Johnson both argued for the idea of racial development and were proponents of the uplift theory. This theory dictated that black elites served as representations of the race and the improvement of the economic, material, and moral conditions of African Americans would diminish racism. This theory was a widespread response to the dominant discourse on the so-called “Negro Problem” in the late nineteenth century. While Washington may have been the most powerful black leader after Frederick Douglass died in 1895, he was not unchallenged in the black community. Johnson disagreed with Washington’s support for disenfranchisement. Instead, Johnson believed strongly in the necessity of African Americans in politics.

After completing his first book, Johnson joined the faculty at Shaw University, before becoming Dean. During this time, he worked as an assistant to the United States District Attorney in the Eastern District of North Carolina.²⁵⁵ In 1907, after struggling as a black lawyer in the Jim Crow South, Johnson left North Carolina and opened a law office in New York. In 1917, Johnson was elected the first black representative to the New York State Assembly. During his term, he supported the passage of many civil rights legislation, including an equal housing accommodation law and a bill to reduce discrimination in publicly supported hospitals.²⁵⁶ However, his support for prohibition caused him to lose his seat. He was defeated in a later Congress bid and wrote several more books, working tirelessly for equality. A progressive thinker in his time, he pushed for the use of black dolls so that black children could learn “to

²⁵⁵ Smith, *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer*, 59.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 398, 439.

respect their own color,” since “to give a Negro child a white doll means to create in it a prejudice against its own color, which will cling to it through life.”²⁵⁷ After a life of activism, he eventually went blind and died in 1944. His legacy and books live on giving testimony to his fight for equality and pride in African American history.

*“Black is no mark of Reproach to People who do not Worship White”*²⁵⁸

Edward Johnson clearly defined his goal at the beginning of his textbook. He declared the book was for the African American teachers to inspire “the boys and girls of the race” to a “new self-respect and confidence.”²⁵⁹ He told the teachers that they “are to teach the truth of history that complexions do not govern patriotism, valor, and sterling integrity.”²⁶⁰ Johnson tried to restore pride in his people, their history, and their contributions to the United States of America. He also reclaimed the word Negro. He wrote, “I respectfully request that my fellow-teachers will see to it that the word *Negro* is written with a capital *N*. it deserves to be so enlarged, and will help, perhaps, to magnify the race it stands for in the minds of those who see it.”²⁶¹ This passage demonstrates Johnson’s dedication to the racial uplift theory.

In this textbook, Johnson had two main goals: to establish black history and the race as faithful, patriotic, and a producer and consumer in the American economy and to mark the progress of the black race in America. He fought against the myth of black degeneracy and the “Negro Problem.” Historian Kevin Gaines declared that “the uplift preoccupation with self-help and respectability, tied to racial stereotypes that demonized the race, revealed the defensive position of aspiring black elites.”²⁶² This defensive position reflected how Johnson inadvertently

²⁵⁷ Edward A. Johnson, “Negro Dolls for Negro Babies,” *Colored American* 14, no. 10 (November 1908): 583-84.

²⁵⁸ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 16.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, i, iv.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, iv.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, v.

²⁶² Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 45.

worked within the Southern Lost Cause narrative, occasionally reinforcing it, when he followed more of an accommodationist social philosophy similar to Booker T. Washington. This accommodation can be seen in many sections of his textbook, but especially in his portrayal of Reconstruction and in some instances, slavery. It reflected the belief in racial progress, which argued for the civilianizing force of slavery, mostly understood through the Christianization of the enslaved. His accommodation is demonstrated in the function of his textbook as a *supplementary* history, instead of replacing the textbooks that he saw as false history or problematic. He did not choose to directly challenge these textbooks, but instead to work besides them as a supplementary history. It was a textbook written exclusively for African American teachers and children and was not meant to be read in white schools.

Johnson believed that the races were distinct and dissimilar. Unlike the contemporary belief in the social construction of race, separate races were a confirmed fact in Johnson's time. Historian Gaines addressed this belief when he acknowledged the efforts of black intellectuals and writers to fight for their rights, but concluded that:

The majority of writers and intellectuals inescapably drew on deeply problematic varieties of knowledge about race. Although there were exceptions, discussions of race and class by blacks and whites, albeit contested, remained separate and unequal, reinforcing racial essentialism. Dominant discourse on race were fraught with a biological determinism that naturalized and upheld existing relations of power and knowledge in regard to political economy, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and American politics and conceptions of nationhood.²⁶³

These dubious ideas of race are evident in Johnson's textbook. Johnson sought to establish an alternate narrative. However, he often did so in a way that is now understood to be problematic, such as perpetuating the myth of the faithful slave and racial progress. Johnson was forced to react defensively to challenge ideas of race perpetuated by the Lost Cause, which sometimes

²⁶³ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xvi.

resulted in him reinforcing it. Johnson attempted to combat the belief in black inferiority by demonstrating the loyalty, bravery, and intelligence of his race through examples of African American heroes and intellectuals. These examples of wealthy or powerful African Americans served as representations of the possibilities of the African American race. These ideas of representation and racial progress were the “two dominant ideological and philosophical constructs of the late nineteenth century” in the African American push for acceptance and racial pride. Johnson also wrestled with establishing the place of African Americans in American history, specifically their right to belong and be considered American, while also recognizing the horrors of slavery and their identification by white Americans as outsiders. Johnson’s work is fairly representational of other black authors in the 1890s, though at times he contradicted the dominant Bookerite social philosophy and instead reflected future trends in black nationalism, similar to W. E. B. Du Bois. There is very little evidence of a personal relationship between Johnson and Du Bois, but Du Bois was at least aware of Johnson; *The Crisis*, where Du Bois was an editor, featured an article praising Johnson’s accomplishments in 1933.²⁶⁴

While Johnson’s textbook was not as widespread as Stephens’s, Lee’s, or Higginson’s, it did enjoy modest popularity. It was the first textbook written by a black author that was accepted by the North Carolina State Board of Education for use in public schools, most likely only black schools. It was later accepted in black schools in Virginia and North Carolina.

This chapter will be split into three parts: Origin of the Race; Slavery; the Civil War; Reconstruction; and Progress. Though he tried to remain fair and impartial, Johnson never lost sight of his goal of uplifting his race from the shadows of American history. He wrote, “We shall rise, not by dragging others down but by encouraging those who are up to extend down to us the

²⁶⁴ “The Life Works of Edward A. Johnson, *The Crisis*, 81 (April, 1933).

helping hand, which we must quickly grasp, and by its help *lift ourselves up*.²⁶⁵ This uplift theory while well-intentioned had problematic connotations.

Origin of the Race

The establishment of a rich history for African Americans was of vital importance. The textbook opened on a discussion of the origin of the African race. Johnson clearly argued that:

Some very wise men, writing to suit prejudiced readers, have endeavored to assign the race to a separate creation and deny its kindred with Adam and Eve. But historical records prove the Negro as ancient as the most ancient races... *The pyramids of Egypt*, the great temples on the Nile, were either built by Negroes or people closely related to them. *All the science and learning* of ancient Greece and Rome was, probably, once in the hands of the foreparents of the American slaves. They are, then, descendants of a race of people once the most powerful on earth, the race of the Pharaohs.²⁶⁶

With this simple statement, he ridiculed the belief in the sub-humanity of Africans and in the same breath established them as a noble and ancient race worthy of respect. The connection between African American history and Egypt was a common argument made by black writers and abolitionists, stretching back to the early nineteenth century.²⁶⁷ So common in fact, that white supremacist Samuel George Morton vowed to undermine it. He published a paper demonstrating that Egyptians were not black by measuring Egyptian skulls, which was used to prove black inferiority.²⁶⁸ Despite this study, Egypt continued to be a source of pride; black nationalism later celebrated the idea of this powerful past. W. E. B. Du Bois attested that “Africa is at once the most romantic and the most tragic of continents.”²⁶⁹ This beginning section sets the tone for the rest of the textbook. Johnson continued, stating that “unless the Bible statement be false that ‘*God created of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth,*’ and

²⁶⁵ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 196.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶⁷ Hall, *A Faithful Account of the Race*, 48.

²⁶⁸ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 75.

²⁶⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro*, (Henry Holt and Company, New York), 9.

all the best historians have erred, then the origin of the Negro is high enough to merit his proudest boasts of the past, and arouse his grandest hopes for the future.”²⁷⁰ Johnson criticized historians of this era, using religion—historically used to justify slavery—to validate racial equality with the backing of God himself. This argument, and the “of one blood” passage, was grounded in a deep abolitionist history as it was an often-quoted passage to fight for equality.²⁷¹ It proved the humanity of the slaves as they too were created in God’s image. This is the most directly critical portion of the textbook. Johnson castigated the racism of the times:

Long Years Spent in the most debilitating climate on earth and violation of divine law, made the African what he was when the slave trade commenced in the 16th century. But his condition was not so bad that he could not be made a good citizen. Nay, he was superior to the ancient savage Briton whom Caesar found in England and described as unfitted to make respectable slaves of the Roman Empire. The Briton has had eighteen centuries to be what he is, the Negro has had really but twenty-five years. Let us weigh his progress in just balances.²⁷²

Here, Johnson pointed out the hypocrisy in racism and the belief in African inferiority. This section clearly laid out the basic tenets of Johnson’s belief in racial equality and destroyed the basic arguments behind racism and the belief in natural racial hierarchy. This quotation also demonstrates the idea of racial progress, with his mention of the African savage and the comparison to the savage Briton, that is integral to Booker T. Washington’s philosophy of racial development. It draws uncomfortable conclusions such as the black race benefiting from slavery. Booker T. Washington wrote in his book, *The Story of the Negro*, echoed Johnson’s argument that “it is disadvantage to him [the Negro] that his progress is constantly compared to the progress of a people who have the advantage of many centuries of civilization, while the Negro

²⁷⁰ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 10.

²⁷¹ Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 246.

²⁷² Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 11-12.

has only a little more than forty years been a free man.”²⁷³ The parallels between Washington and Johnson are clear. In his textbook, Johnson demonstrated his belief in racial progress with how he formulated his history of African Americans in America.

Slavery, Resistance and Rebellion

Johnson combined several different factors into his retelling of the horrors of slavery, resistance, and rebellion. He included roles that Africans and African Americans have played throughout history, emphasizing the contributions they made to American society. Johnson described slave resistance through accounts of runaways, rebellion, and the people who rose above slavery to do great deeds and disprove the negative stereotypes about African Americans. Johnson established two main points: that *both* the North and South have a long sordid history of oppression and slavery and that the enslaved did not meekly submit to slavery but sought freedom and resisted the dehumanization inherent in slavery. Johnson did not absolve the North of their role in perpetuating slavery.

Johnson discussed the history of slavery state by state. He did not shy away from denouncing the brutality committed by many. He paid special attention to the history of slavery in Massachusetts to highlight the hypocritical portrayal of the Puritans as moral, good people. Johnson concluded that the Puritans “who came to this country in search of liberty, carried on for more than a century a traffic in human flesh and blood.”²⁷⁴ The juxtaposition of the founding story of the Puritans who sought freedom with the slave trade demonstrated that slavery was entangled in every part of American history. In New York, Johnson reiterated this point, writing “the famous Wall Street, now the financial centre of the New World, was once the scene of an

²⁷³ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, (Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1909), 395-396.

²⁷⁴ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 25.

auction block where Indians and persons of Negro descent were bought and sold.”²⁷⁵ The North could not escape the stain of slavery, even if they preemptively outlawed it. This point is similarly argued by Stephens and Lee. Though they have radically different goals than Johnson, their point still stands. The North is not absolved because of their role in the war.

Overall, the Southern states received the greatest criticism in Johnson’s book, but North Carolina, Johnson’s home state, was largely spared. He wrote that in North Carolina “even to the present time the Negroes and white of this State seem to enjoy the most harmonious relations.”²⁷⁶ Perhaps “the most harmonious relations” are only as compared to the other Southern states; he added that when the state’s slave population grew too large, they were sold to other Southern states.²⁷⁷ Johnson himself relocated from North Carolina to New York in the height of the Jim Crow South.

Johnson was particularly critical of Georgia. The colony outlawed slavery until the colony was in a “hopeless condition” and the inhabitants could not see a way towards economic growth without the exploitation of labor.²⁷⁸ Johnson argued that it was the labor of his people that “turned the richness of Georgia’s soil into English gold, built cities and created large estates, gilded mansions furnished with gold and silver plate.”²⁷⁹ Further north, South Carolina also was “marvelously prosperous under the slave system” but had “very rigid and extreme laws...such as branding, and cutting the ‘ham-string’ of the leg” to prevent and punish runaways.”²⁸⁰ Here Johnson demonstrated how the South, and America more broadly, benefited from the exploitation of Africans and African Americans under the system of slavery. He interspersed

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 23.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 41.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 42.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 46-47.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 44.

these accounts of the horrors of slavery with accounts of resistance and rebellion. The enslaved constantly fought for freedom and resisted the oppression of slavery.

*Our “Only Wish was...Freedom”*²⁸¹

Johnson documented resistance during slavery through the use of powerful, personal accounts demonstrating the ability to rise above and succeed despite it. Here, Johnson successfully honored the memory of people who had been long forgotten. As previously mentioned, Johnson believed that positive representation was critical to racial pride and progress. Therefore, it is unsurprising that he mentioned more of the successes than the failures, creating, at times, a lopsided impression of slavery. Through positive representation like many other black writers, Johnson was attempting to “empower by presenting powerful views of racial possibility.”²⁸² However, by writing only the positive stories of escape based on cunning and bravery, Johnson masked the impossibility of escape for thousands of enslaved. It also degraded their intelligence and aptitude for their inability to be like the few who succeeded in escaping.

In every section, he wrote about extraordinary African Americans. In his Massachusetts section, Johnson used four pages to describe the intelligence and modesty of Phillis Wheatley, who on her death, was described as “brightest of the race, whose life was as pure as a crystal and devoted to the most beautiful in poetry, letters and religion, and exemplifies the capabilities of the race.”²⁸³ In the Maryland chapter, Johnson described Benjamin Banneka, a genius astronomer and mathematician and “did much to establish the fact that the Negro of his time could master the arts and sciences.”²⁸⁴ In North Carolina, George M. Horton was a poet whose

²⁸¹ Ibid., 94.

²⁸² Hall, *A Faithful Account of the Race*, 170.

²⁸³ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 31.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 36.

poems “excited the wonder and admiration of the best men in this country.”²⁸⁵ Thomas Fuller of Virginia was a slave “stolen from his home in Africa” who earned a reputation as a genius mathematician.²⁸⁶ Johnson wrote, on the day of Fuller’s death, many newspapers declared that had there been equality in education and opportunity “neither the Royal Society of London, the Academy of Sciences at Paris, nor even a Newton himself need have been ashamed to acknowledge him a brother in science.”²⁸⁷ Johnson sought to demonstrate that this man was equivalent to Newton himself; a representative of his race. Johnson continued after this statement, declaring:

How many of his kind might there have been had the people of Jamestown seen fit to give the Negroes who came to their shores a laborer’s and emigrant’s chance rather than enslaved them! Much bloodshed and dissension might thus have been avoided, and the honor of the nation never besmirched with human bondage.²⁸⁸

All of the accounts above cement the lamentation and anger felt in this quote. Here, Johnson proved that African Americans are equal in intelligence, morality, and ability to succeed, if given half a chance. His portrayals were key examples of the racial uplift theory and the progress of the race. Johnson’s textbook embraced these theories as many other black authors did, such as Daniel Barclay Williams’s 1890 *Freedom and Progress*, William Henry Croghan’s 1897 *Progress of the Race; or, The Remarkable Advancement of the Afro-American Negro*, Booker T. Washington’s 1901 *Up from Slavery*, and W.E.B. Du Bois’s 1903 *Talented Tenth*. Johnson’s representations of extraordinary people were indisputably written for black children; he wanted to give them examples of historical figures that they would fill them with pride. Johnson overwhelmingly focused on men as figures of note, which was also indicative of the late

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 42.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

nineteenth century emphasis on the patriarchy as “for many black elites, uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and accumulation of wealth.”²⁸⁹ Women were largely left out of the picture. Phillis Wheatley is one of the only women mentioned before the Civil War. Despite including her, Johnson still focused on her purity and innocence as paradigms of womanhood. In American society, black women were increasingly thought as oversexualized and deviant beings because of the problematic legacy of rape during slavery.²⁹⁰ These sexist overtones illustrate how the intense focus of racial uplift forced black women into a chaste Victorian role, the pinnacle of femininity.²⁹¹ The patriarchal focus served to doubly oppress black women during this time. Not all resistance was passive, and Johnson devoted part of his book to slave rebellions as a powerful form of resistance.

*Those “Who ‘Struck’ for Freedom”*²⁹²

Johnson usually prefaced any mention of rebellion by first underscoring the harsh treatment endured. Furthermore, he always stressed that the enslaved who fought wished only for freedom, not bloodshed. This framework denied the widespread belief in slaves’ thirst for the blood and death of whites. Johnson declared that violence only occurred when the enslaved were first mistreated. This defensive portrayal is cognizant of the belief that black people, and especially black men, degenerated and regressed into beasts out of slavery.²⁹³ Johnson only briefly mentioned the Riot of 1712 and the Stono Rebellion, including a straight-forward statement of what happened without analysis or judgment. His neutral language placed the harsh

²⁸⁹ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 2.

²⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*.

²⁹¹ Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 106; Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 12.

²⁹² Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 90.

²⁹³ Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 136.

treatment that the enslaved endured in juxtaposition to the reactionary violence they used. In addition, it discouraged any accusation of the inherent, degenerate nature of African Americans.

In a section titled “Blount’s Fort,” Johnson wrote an account that had striking parallels to the American Revolution. Blount’s Fort was an abandoned fort where escaped slaves lived in freedom for forty years. Children had been born who had never known the lash and “their parents had taught them that to die in the swamps with liberty was better than to feast as a bondman and a slave.”²⁹⁴ Johnson described it as a haven for African Americans and this fort served as a symbol of their power. The people were very afraid when an army was sent to recapture the fort except for “an aged father whose back bore the print of the lash, and whose shoulder bore the brand of his master. He assured the people that the fort could not be taken and ended his speech with these patriotic words: ‘Give me liberty, or give me death.’”²⁹⁵ With this quotation, Johnson referenced Patrick Henry, who spoke those same famous words in front of a Virginian Convention in 1775. His allusion to the Revolutionary war compared that cause with the escaped slaves who only wanted to remain free, connecting African Americans to revolution tradition.

Tragically, a cannon shot hit the powder store and blew up the entire fort, killing over one hundred people. Johnson described how “the mangled limbs of mothers and babies lay side by side...all were left as fat prey for vultures to feast upon. For fifty years afterward, the bones of these brave people lay bleaching in the sun,” murdered “merely for their love of liberty.”²⁹⁶ This dramatic rendition demonstrated the cruelty of a slave society. Johnson’s language in this section reflected the anguish of this scene. To Johnson, these men and women fought only for freedom

²⁹⁴ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 90.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

and liberty from tyranny, just like the Founding Fathers of United States of America. Linking the birth of America to the Civil War served to bring African Americans into the American tradition and implied a quintessential Americanness to the escaped slaves. It also served to increase empathy for their plight.

Johnson examined the virtues of the leaders of rebellions in a separate chapter. Johnson praised Nat Turner, calling him “unusually bright,”²⁹⁷ a “prodigy,”²⁹⁸ and “undoubtedly, a wonderful character. Knowing as he did, the risk he ran, what an immense courage he must have had to undertake this bold adventure.”²⁹⁹ This admiration demonstrated how Johnson understood the justification for rebellion. Unlike Johnson, when Higginson mentioned Turner in his textbook, he only noted the bloodshed, without going through the justification of Turner’s actions. Johnson mentioned many who fought for their freedom, including Avery Watkins, Madison Washington, African Americans in the Dismal Swamp, the Amistad Captives, and more. All these stories demonstrated resistance to slavery by the enslaved. Johnson documented the existence of black resistance in order to argue against the 1890s widespread romanticization of slavery in the Old South.

The Faithful Slave and Soldier

The faithful slave narrative, discussed in Chapter One, is based on the idea that slaves were faithful to their masters during the Civil War and did not want to leave bondage. Johnson believed in the evils of slavery, as seen in the previous section, but he remarked in many places upon the loyalty that slaves had to America and their enslavers. Instead of glorifying slavery, he

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 90.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 92.

spun this narrative to use it as proof of the good-hearted nature of the black race. Despite his attempted rebranding, it did not disprove the idea of the faithful slave, therefore reinforcing it.

Johnson established the faithfulness of the enslaved, not to their servitude, but to their loyalty to the United States of America. He described many examples of black loyalty to America, even if they or their brethren were enslaved. In his preface, Johnson wrote:

Though a slave to this government, his was the first bloodshed in its defense in those days when a foreign foe threatened its destruction. In each of the American wars the Negro was faithful—yes, faithful to a land not his own in points of rights and freedom, but, indeed, a land that, after he had shouldered his musket to defend, rewarded him with a renewed term of slavery. Patriotism and valor under such circumstances possess a peculiar merit and beauty.³⁰⁰

Notice in this quotation that “he” was used to represent the entire black population. In the spirit of his time, Johnson placed more emphasis on African American men’s acts of resistance, bravery, and enterprise than women’s. Though he mentioned some accounts of black women, his focus was mainly on black men, which reflected the need to defend against the attacks on black manhood in the 1890s. In this quotation, Johnson identified the faithfulness of African Americans to a nation that did not believe in black equality or black freedom. This was a key part of his narrative and beliefs: the righteousness and moral superiority of the “Negro”. Johnson struck back against myths and allegations of black denigration and beastlike nature by demonstrating their bravery and loyalty to the nation even when they had nothing to gain except a hope for their eventual freedom. To Johnson, these men represented true martyrs.

Crispus Attucks, the first to die in the Boston Massacre, was key to Johnson’s demonstration of black loyalty. Johnson declared that, “though a runaway slave, his patriotism was so deep that he it was who sacrificed his life *first* on the altar of American Liberty.”³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Ibid., iv.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 63.

Crispus Attucks was a common figure lauded by abolitionists and black activists. Higginson even mentioned Attucks by name, describing him as “a mulatto, and the leader of the mob.”³⁰² Although that is about all he wrote about Crispus Attucks, Higginson did acknowledge Attucks as the leader, which was more than most textbooks from this era. Unsurprisingly, Stephens and Lee did not mention Crispus Attucks in their textbooks.

The easiest path to prove African American loyalty and goodwill was through military service. Johnson extolled the deeds of black soldiers during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. In the Revolutionary War, he portrayed the black population as a powerful force, which both sides tried to influence to join their side in the war. The colonists, nervous about the enslaved joining the British side, tried to entice them to their side. Johnson stated that “the newspapers were filled with kind words for the slaves, trying to convince them...that their best interests were centered in the triumph of the Colonial army.”³⁰³ If the majority of their enslaved population joined the British, it would greatly weaken the South. Johnson accused the British of insincerity and in reality, being pro-slavery. He stipulated that “the slaves who joined the British army were subjected to all sorts of horrors. Thousands died with small-pox and other contagious diseases. A great number were sent to the West Indies in exchange ‘for rum, sugar, coffee and fruit.’”³⁰⁴ This was not true.

In contrast, Johnson saw the colonists’ shift and “the sentiment began to change in the Negro’s favor” as more genuine than the British.³⁰⁵ His trust in this sentiment can be construed as an effort to instill a redeemable nature in Americans in order for African American children to

³⁰² Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1898), 169.

³⁰³ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 57.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

identify in the American tradition. He provided a different narrative when talking about how the enslaved picked a side:

British hatred to Negro freedom thus made itself plain to the New England slaves, and a few years later... the slave population enlisted largely in the defense of the colonists. And thus the Negro slave by valor, patriotism and industry, began to loosen the chains of his own bondage in the Northern colonies.³⁰⁶

The loyalty shown by the enslaved provided a path to freedom. This belief was reflected in the way Johnson introduced the Revolutionary war. He wrote, “in it Providence no doubt designed an opportunity for the race to loosen the rivets in the chains that bound them. They made good use of this opportunity.”³⁰⁷ Here, Johnson’s narrative breaks down. While he praised the loyalty and faithfulness of the enslaved and free blacks who helped the colonists in gaining their freedom, they did not receive freedom themselves. He also described one of the main motivations for helping the colonists. Chiefly, they were motivated by hope for their own freedom, which they were denied. Johnson was engaging with other black and white authors’ interpretations of black soldiers. He differed slightly from Booker T. Washington’s discussions of the motivations of black soldiers; Washington declared that this loyalty demonstrated that way in which the “Negro has adapted his own life to that of the people around him, uniting his interests and his sympathies with those of the dominant white race.”³⁰⁸ In contrast, Johnson emphasized the motivation of freedom rather than of pure selflessness. Despite this disagreement, he presented both motivation without trying to reconcile them, a technique he used in other discussions of loyalty, faithfulness, and resistance. It’s possible that he used this technique in order to overturn negative stereotypes by not only heralding the deeds and progress of African Americans, but also by making them seem almost superhuman in their altruism,

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 51-52.

³⁰⁸ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1909), 392.

faithfulness, kindness, resistance, and bravery. Even in his attempt to overturn these problematic stereotypes, Johnson only more successfully supported the myth of the faithful slave.

To describe the loyalty of the enslaved, Johnson provided eight accounts of black men—no women—illustrating how they were courageous or generous and helped the war effort with little benefit to themselves. Judge Story and Peter Salem were soldiers at Bunker Hill who saved many lives; Prince Whipple captured General Prescott and appears in the famous picture *Washington Crossing the Delaware*; John Freeman, Samuel Charlton, and James Armistead all helped in the war effort; and L. Latham was a slave but “he too made haste to the scene of the fray, and the above bold deed shows how deeply he felt moved to give his life in defence of his country.”³⁰⁹ These accounts demonstrated real examples of bravery and loyalty by African American soldiers and the enslaved to their nation alike.

Black involvement increased during the War of 1812. Johnson stated that “a call for volunteers...was issued, and many thousands of free Negroes answered the call. The slaves were not allowed to enlist in the militia.”³¹⁰ The way that Johnson framed this insinuates that if slaves could enlist, they would have because of patriotic reasons. This directly contradicted his earlier claim that slaves enlisted for a chance at freedom. In the War of 1812, the bravery and loyalty of African American soldiers was proved once again. Future President Jackson concluded:

*To the Men of Color—Soldiers: ... I expected much from you...I knew that you loved the land of your nativity, and that, like ourselves, you had to defend all that is most dear to man. But you have surpassed all my hopes. I have found in you, united to these qualities, that noble enthusiasm which impels to great deeds.*³¹¹

Johnson often included quotations from famous figures in history to establish legitimacy. Here, even someone of great worth and renown knew the honor and great spirit of his people. Johnson

³⁰⁹ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 70-71.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

again underlined the ability of black soldiers by quoting Commodore Chancy: “I have yet to learn that the color of the skin, or the cut and trimmings of the coat, can affect a man’s qualifications or usefulness. I have fifty blacks on board this ship, and many of them are among my best man.”³¹² This belief in equality was extremely rare, but war proved to be a great opportunity for African Americans to prove themselves.

Johnson described the bravery of the soldiers with personal stories. John Johnson and John Davis, when struck down, still encouraged their fellow soldiers to keep firing, barking orders to not let the flag fall.³¹³ He not only described heroics but also injustice done to veterans of the War of 1812. Major Jeffreys, a war hero lauded by General Jackson himself and “much respected by all classes,” was whipped with a raw hide for thirty-nine lashes at the age of seventy when he hit a white man in self-defense.³¹⁴ He did not recover and “soon died of a broken heart.”³¹⁵ This dramatic incident demonstrated the injustice and racism inherent in the law and in America. Many African American heroes and ordinary people were erased from the white, national, historical narrative. Johnson allowed their voices to be heard.

Abolition: “He offered no Compromise and asked only for Liberty”³¹⁶

It is unclear if Johnson was aware of Higginson’s textbook, but there are sharp differences in the way that they wrote about abolition history. Higginson focused almost exclusively on white abolitionists while Johnson gave recognition to the enslaved and free blacks who freed themselves. Furthermore, Johnson acknowledged the role of white abolitionists but did not give them all the credit. At his most praiseworthy, he wrote that they “furnished many brave hearts

³¹² Ibid., 77-78.

³¹³ Ibid., 77.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 99.

and strong minds from their ranks. Their work continued with slow growth for awhile, but nevertheless certain and effectual.”³¹⁷ He praised the first anti-slavery convention but then contextualized it by stating that the free people of color also held an anti-slavery convention whose “first work was to get recognition from the white organizations, who shut them out.”³¹⁸ This criticism of abolitionism did not exist to Higginson, who saw only their valor. Johnson was more realistic about the North’s complicity with slavery and its rampant racism. The only two white abolitionists he spoke highly of were Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe and Senator Charles Sumner. Johnson also briefly mentioned John Brown but did not say anything but the bare facts of what happened. He did not idolize Brown like Higginson or vilify him as Stephens and Lee had. Johnson placed more stock instead on African American abolitionists and runaways.

Higginson, like many other white abolitionists, gave himself much of the credit when talking about the Underground Railroad, often depicting themselves as heroes of the story. Historian Jeffrey concluded this; white abolitionists often saw themselves as the “capable white hero of [their] story.”³¹⁹ Johnson, like William Still, a famous black abolitionist and author of *The Underground Railroad*, shifted the focus to the enslaved, who used their wits and minds to free themselves with some help from abolitionists. Johnson described the story of William and Ellen Craft who were slaves in Georgia. To Johnson, the Crafts had “hearts yearned for freedom” and therefore “their minds were at once set to work to formulate some plan of escape.”³²⁰ The Crafts are the heroes of their story; they came up with the plan to escape and found their way from Georgia to Philadelphia, where only then did they meet up with abolitionists.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 80.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 82.

³¹⁹ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 129.

³²⁰ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 101.

The only abolitionist that Johnson effusively praised was Frederick Douglass, whom he declared was a “conspicuous representative and of the talents and capabilities possessed by the colored race...When Frederick Douglass speaks the world listens.”³²¹ Johnson dedicated a whole chapter to Douglass as opposed to Higginson, who failed to even mention him. Johnson placed higher trust black abolitionists and the power of the enslaved to free themselves.

The War of Rebellion

As this textbook was written as supplementary history, Johnson did not give a complete history of the Civil War but focused almost entirely on the bravery and large role of African American soldiers in the war and the help that the enslaved and servants gave to the Union Army. Johnson had little sympathy for the South; the Civil War, which he called the War of Rebellion, “was destined to shake the very foundation of Southern civilization.”³²² For Higginson and Johnson, the South committed an act of rebellion when they seceded and bombed Fort Sumter. He did not mention the issue of state rights and saw that the war as fought over the right to own slaves.

Johnson was not only critical of the South. He noted that when Lincoln rallied the North, “the motto was, *no blacks need apply*. There was great prejudice in the North against the Negro’s enlisting to fight for his freedom, and the President was also opposed to it.”³²³ Johnson did not see Lincoln as the Great Emancipator but implied that public sentiment in the North and the praises of other military officers made Lincoln changed his mind about African American soldiers. He does not absolve the North. He also claimed that Lincoln only delivered the Emancipation Proclamation as a “war measure, very necessary under the circumstances to

³²¹ Ibid., 84.

³²² Ibid., 102.

³²³ Ibid., 103.

shorten the war.”³²⁴ Here, Johnson made an argument similar to Stephens and Lee, who believed that Lincoln was only influenced by the Abolitionists. Johnson criticized Lincoln for this lack of support, while Stephens and Lee, in some sense, exonerate him. Nevertheless, Lincoln called for African Americans to enlist and “the Right to Fight for what they thought would ultimately end in their freedom was hailed with shouts of joy wherever the tidings reached the Negroes.”³²⁵ This quotation ignored the racism and unequal treatment that African American soldiers received at the hands of the Union government and Army.

*“Thus, the Former Slave went forth to meet his Master...sometimes to fall side by side”*³²⁶

Johnson, like Higginson, greatly praised the black soldiers. However, unlike Higginson, Johnson did so without the blatant racism. Johnson sought to give African American soldiers the accolades they deserved as they were often forgotten or erased from the public memory in the 1890s. Johnson documented the soldiers’ “the mad rush of the colored people to register their names on the army records,”³²⁷ “anxious to fight for their freedom,”³²⁸ “unrivalled daring and heroic courage,”³²⁹ “fought courageously, and fully satisfied all doubts concerning their valor,”³³⁰ “Negro soldiers covered themselves with merited glory in the presence of white troops on both sides,”³³¹ “the colored troops had won the day,”³³² and “the hardest fighting was done by the black troops.”³³³ From these passages, we can see that Johnson focused heavily on the role of black soldiers in the Civil War. Interspersed, he quoted top generals, officers, and newspapers

³²⁴ Ibid., 107-108.

³²⁵ Ibid., 106.

³²⁶ Ibid., 106-107.

³²⁷ Ibid., 106.

³²⁸ Ibid., 104.

³²⁹ Ibid., 112.

³³⁰ Ibid., 115.

³³¹ Ibid., 122.

³³² Ibid., 123.

³³³ Ibid., 125.

that proved his claim and story of their bravery. He also included a section where he listed all the famous battles in which African American soldiers played a part.³³⁴ Johnson tried to demonstrate the courage of African Americans soldiers, restoring their pride as men and as Americans in the 1890s, where both were called into question with stereotypes of black degeneracy.

Johnson pointed out the racism of the North toward black soldiers, highlighting their lack of equal pay or treatment. Johnson noted that at the beginning of the war:

The sentiment of the Northern army seemed to have a conspicuous leaning toward admitting the right of the South to hold slaves. General Butler refused the runaway slave quarters in his headquarters. McClellan, a reeking failure as a commander, said, with others, that if he thought he was fighting to free the ‘niggers’ he would sheath his sword. He soon failed in the Virginia campaign and was forced to resign.³³⁵

Johnson included these testimonies to complicate the belief in Northern heroism that existed in postwar history because of emancipation and the linked narrative of fighting for freedom. The North was often openly complicit in protecting the system of slavery before the war and was not united in a desire to end slavery; very few believed in racial equality. Johnson included instances of Northern racism to demonstrate how black soldiers proved their worth and often overcame these prejudices. Johnson wrote “their soldierly qualities were on trial; the experiment of arming Negroes to fight for the Union was being tried. This the colored troops seemed to realize, and it stimulated them to do their very best.”³³⁶ The New York Times declared that “the deeds of heroism performed by these men were such as the proudest white men might emulate. Their colors are literally bespattered with blood and brains.”³³⁷ This graphic language imbued the reader with the imagery of black soldiers as martyrs, dying for their freedom. It likewise demonstrated the lack of respect for black bodies and black lives.

³³⁴ Ibid., 110.

³³⁵ Ibid., 105.

³³⁶ Ibid., 115.

³³⁷ Ibid., 112.

*“Ever be it remembered to the honor and credit of the Negro race of America, they protected faithfully and industrially”*³³⁸

As discussed earlier, Johnson played with the narrative of the faithful slave in his discussion of slavery, but during the Civil War sections he more openly invoked this idea. In his discussion of the Emancipation Proclamation, Johnson wrote “the South would have surrendered in half the time had not a large number of slaves remained on the plantation raising supplies for the Confederate army, and supporting and protecting their masters’ families.”³³⁹ This statement echoed much of the Lost Cause ideology about the faithful slave who protected their masters during the war. This reflection of that narrative is seen again in Johnson’s description:

On the Confederate Side, there were enlisted throughout the South, in various employments, some 6000 colored troops, But all over the South, while their masters were away at war, the Negro women and men were enlisted in the ranks of the private duties of the Southern soldiers’ homes, which, ever be it remembered to the honor and credit of the Negro race of America, they protected faithfully and industriously. The opportunity for outrage and plunder was open to every side, but not a hurtful hand was laid on the thousands of white widows, orphans, and aged, who lay defenceless in the Negroes’ power. This action on the part of the slaves proves that the race is not fond of bloodshed, and is kind even to its foes.³⁴⁰

The connection to the faithful slave mythology is obvious. The acceptance of this narrative by some black intellectuals, however, is complicated. Frederick Douglass and others who lived through slavery and were involved with the abolition movement urged a complete break with the history of slavery. Douglass wrote “Our past was slavery. We cannot recur to it with any sense of complacency or composure. The history of it is a record of stripes, a revelation of agony. It is written in characters of blood. Its breath is a sigh, its voice a groan, and we turn from it with a

³³⁸ Ibid., 126.

³³⁹ Ibid., 108.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 126.

shudder.”³⁴¹ After Douglass’s death and Booker T. Washington’s rise to popularity in the black community, Washington led a contrasting narrative urging a deeper acceptance of slavery. He preached this acknowledgment through ideas of racial progress and the belief in slavery as a beneficial good for African Americans. These ideas lined up more closely with the dominant beliefs in the faithful slave narrative and slavery as beneficial, accommodating the South’s dominant beliefs. This philosophy and the belief in benefits of slavery only enabled a “purposeful forgetting” and the further establishment of the idea of the faithful slave.³⁴² This type of reconciliation cemented the portrayal of the faithful slave in the minds of the North, which the southern Lost Cause advocates had not yet been completely able to do.³⁴³ In Johnson’s attempt to challenge the Lost Cause, in this aspect he instead reinforced it.

It is also possible that African American intellectuals may have accepted the faithful slave narrative because it undermined the portrayal of African Americans as beast-like. If they were loyal to a society that brutalized them, then undoubtedly, they were kind-hearted and altruistic. It may have seemed the better option out of two evils. For these reasons, Johnson engaged with the faithful slave narrative in his descriptions of loyalty shown by the enslaved during the war. This act of protection proved their superior nature. Here, the attempts to romanticize and glorify the enslaved to heroic proportions are seen. Johnson described the resistance and rebellion of the enslaved who fought for freedom with all their might, even with violence and rebellion, yet he depicted their faithfulness and loyalty to these slaveowners who had beaten, raped, murdered, and separated their families. Johnson used this contradiction to make the enslaved morally superior as they would endure such terrible oppression and still have such loyalty and affection

³⁴¹ Frederick Douglass, “Future of the Race: As Carefully Reviewed by Mr. Douglass” *A.M.A. Church Review* 2 (October 1885), 220.

³⁴² Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 331.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 330.

to their enslavers. Despite this attempt, it still reinforced the myth of the faithful slave and therefore the Lost Cause.

Johnson continued, concluding that “some plantations...were found in better trim on the return of the masters from the war than when they left them.”³⁴⁴ This improvement demonstrated not only loyalty to their homes but the skill and agricultural ability that the enslaved had gained over the years working on plantations. Johnson’s acknowledgment of this ability foreshadowed the progress that he described after the war in his attempt to disprove stereotypes that black men were lazy and lacked business acumen.

Reconstruction: “Amnesty was offered [to] all those who Desired it”³⁴⁵

Overall, Johnson presented a rose-tinted view of Reconstruction. He did not ignore the injustices to the same extent that Higginson had, but he still focused primarily on the progress of African Americans since slavery instead of criticizing the North or South. He did not spend much time on the politics, only once mentioning the Ku Klux Klan.³⁴⁶ Considering how much detail Johnson provided when discussing the horrors of slavery, it is remarkable that Johnson made almost no comment on the oppression by white Southerners. He mentioned that “the right to vote was denied the colored people. Exclusion from public places was established by law...When white people were implicated, colored people could not testify in the courts.”³⁴⁷ This protest was made before the Fifteenth Amendment passed. After it was approved, Johnson stated that “thus, the eleven Southern States were reconstructed on a basis of universal suffrage, and the colored race began to develop statesmen, orators, lawyers, judges, teachers of various kinds,

³⁴⁴ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 136.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

ministers, and discreet, far-seeing business men.”³⁴⁸ This quotation gives the impression that after Reconstruction was over and the Fifteenth Amendment passed, the South was peaceful. Johnson did not provide any additional critiques of Reconstruction politics. Interestingly enough, Johnson identified Reconstruction as ending in 1868. Generally, historians cite the end of Reconstruction with the Compromise of 1876, which resulted in the removal of troops from the South. Johnson could be coinciding the end with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Most states were also readmitted to the Union in 1868, barring Virginia, Texas, Georgia, and Mississippi. It could be the point where Johnson felt the North stopped giving aid to African Americans. It remained unclear.

“So great was this Thirst for Knowledge...Such a Stampede, Such an ardent desire...was possibly never witnessed anywhere before”³⁴⁹

The Freedman’s Bureau was one of the most important parts of Reconstruction. Johnson, and many other black intellectuals, revered education as a path to civilization and success. This bias was clearly demonstrated in his discussion of the Freedman’s Bureau. The Freedman’s Bureau had many functions—providing food, housing, medical aid, and legal assistance—but Johnson mentioned only that “the design of this institution was to educate the newly emancipated colored people into all the ways of freedom.”³⁵⁰ Johnson saw education as the most important function; he did not even mention the rest. This passion for education fought against the stereotype of lazy, ignorant, freed slaves that were perpetuated by many Southerners who believed that the Republican government was just leading the newly freed slaves like sheep. Lee

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 139.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

and Stephens both believed and perpetuated this narrative. Johnson, on the other hand, only had bountiful praise for the Bureau and General Oliver Otis Howard, the director:

His design was to make the colored people better citizens in every respect. With him was associated a saintly corps of devoted, missionary-inclined white men and women... Many of these people came from the best families of the North, were well educated, refined and cultured. Their pupils were not slow in catching the beautiful graces of these instructors, and their extra qualities are demonstrated in the wonderful educational progress the race has made within only twenty-six years of actual freedom.³⁵¹

This description of the Freedmen's Bureau lacked any mention of the corruption or opposition faced inside the Bureau, outside in the South, or from President Johnson. Historian Marie Brosnan concluded that "while the freed people looked to schooling as an opportunity for social, political, and economic advancement, the white population... often perceived freedmen's education as a means of maintaining social control and white supremacy."³⁵² Brosnan argued that while some teachers genuinely wanted to educate freed slaves, they were the minority. Many only sought to enforce the racial hierarchy. Despite this, Johnson had only praise: this lack of criticism only allowed an unbalanced narrative to form as none of the downfalls of Reconstruction were mentioned.

"I ask what Race could have done More?"³⁵³

The description of African American progress since slavery constituted the greatest amount of space in Johnson's textbook. He dedicated the last fifty-three pages of his book to just this account.³⁵⁴ This section is twenty-seven percent of his entire book, far greater than either Higginson or Stephens spent on the entire Civil War. This did not even factor in the rest of the

³⁵¹ Ibid., 140.

³⁵² Marie Brosnan, "Representations of Race and Racism in the Textbooks used in Southern Black Schools during the American Civil War and Reconstruction era, 1861-1876," *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 52, no. 6 (2016): 732.

³⁵³ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 145.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 142-195.

book, which has model examples of many wealthy or successful African Americans throughout. The dedication of such a large percentage of the book demonstrated the importance of racial progress and instilling racial pride; key factors in the racial uplift theory. This section was split into several chapters that described the religious, educational, and financial progress of noted African Americans. Johnson's strategy for describing life after the war was to focus on the positive gains made rather than detailing the oppression and racism experienced in the South and the North. Johnson wrote this book in the beginning of the Jim Crow era; he knew the reality of being a black man in the South, but he did not mention the hardships. He focused only on progress as he was eager to demonstrate how far African Americans had come since slavery. The emphasis on progress, representation, and accommodation to the South was the dominant African American philosophy in the 1890s, led by Booker T. Washington. Johnson subscribed to many of these beliefs and often reinforced the Lost Cause in his attempt to challenge it.

Johnson believed that the enslaved would succeed through their hard work, passion for education, and faith in God. He fought against stereotypes of freed slaves turning on their previous masters and slaughtering whites in their sleep. Lee and Stephens worried about the degenerate nature of freed slaves. Johnson sought to overturn this conviction. He contested:

When the war ended, the whole South was in an unsettled condition—property destroyed, thousands of her sons dead on the battle-field, no credit, conquered. But if the condition of the whites was bad, that of the blacks was *worse*. They were without homes, money, or learning. They were now to feed, clothe, and protect themselves in a government whose treasury they had enriched with two centuries and a half of unrequited labor, and a country whose laws they must obey but could not read. It was natural that they should make mistakes. But they made less mistakes than the *bummers* who came South for plunder during reconstruction times, and with the false promise of 'forty acres and a mule,' led the unlettered race into a season of idleness and vain hopes. But this condition did not last. The Negro inherited the ability to work from the institution of slavery. He soon set about to utilize this ability.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 144-145.

This quotation is multi-faceted. The idea of the South as a victim, which was explored in the first chapter, was accepted by Johnson, agreeing with Stephens and Lee. He reformulated this dominant narrative to demonstrate that Southern African Americans were worse off but still reinforced the basic tenets of the Lost Cause. While Johnson mentioned the exploitation of slave's labor, he did not address the idea of repatriation. Instead, he actually apologized for the mistakes of freed slaves and harshly denounced freed slaves who expected help from the government. This apologetic approach reflected the accommodationist approach and reinforced the Lost Cause belief that Reconstruction failed because of the attitudes of freed slaves and northern corruption. Though Johnson challenged some aspects of the Lost Cause, he backed others. It was also representative of the dominant attitude that the government should leave the South alone. Southern African Americans. He also clearly concluded in the quotation that African Americans learned how to work during slavery, which echoes Washington's claim of the beneficial nature of slavery: "American blacks who 'went through the school of American slavery' were 'materially, intellectually, morally, and religiously' the most advanced 'black people in any other portion of the globe.'"³⁵⁶ Johnson, to a certain extent, believed this and therefore again reinforced the Lost Cause.

Washington had significant influence on Johnson's discussion of the post-slavery progress of African Americans. Johnson wrote "the race that comes out of slavery with more than it had before it went in," a reference to the conversion to Christianity.³⁵⁷ Johnson believed in the civilizing agent of Christianity. This belief is reflected in his view that the Africans first fell from their position of power in the world due to the "accord with the Bible prophecy of all

³⁵⁶ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 38.

³⁵⁷ Johnson, *A School History of the Negro Race*, 143.

nations who forgot God and worshipped idols.”³⁵⁸ With this mindset, Christianity was taught to the “desperately savage” Africans who had lost their way and through the trials of slavery found their way back to God.³⁵⁹ This belief mirrored the idea of progress and propelled the dangerous narrative of slaves benefiting from slavery. This description again reinforced the Lost Cause

When Johnson mentioned the hardships of being African American in the South during the Jim Crow era, he interspersed it with positive statements about how far they had come since slavery, in the spirit of reconciliation and accommodation. The most illuminating section in these final chapters was titled, “What the South is Doing for Negro Education.” He affirmed that it would be a “serious error” to not mention what the South was doing in regard to black education.³⁶⁰ He wrote, “at first bitterly opposed to Negro education, there has been a wonderful change of sentiment on this subject. They made laws against Negro education before the war, now they make laws for it.”³⁶¹ This low bar for progress may have made it easier for Johnson to sing praises for Southern support. Later, he contradicted himself, declaring “the royal road to knowledge is beyond question closed to the young colored man.”³⁶² How did Johnson reconcile his earlier statement about the Southern support for education with this perspective? It may be the difference between law and reality. Johnson noted that it was very difficult for Southern blacks to pay for their education past secondary education. He wrote that “his own brawny muscle is usually the young colored student’s means of support...the time usually used by the white student in foot-ball and other games is utilized by the colored student in faithful toil.”³⁶³ African Americans must work daily to pay for the education. This was not said in condemnation

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 10.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 11.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 156.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 156-157.

³⁶² Ibid., 158.

³⁶³ Ibid., 159-160.

towards this reality nor in criticism towards the character of the Southern states, but more to prove the hard work and the sacrifices that African Americans would endure for education.

Johnson closed his text with a plethora of success stories. Johnson listed properties owned by people of color³⁶⁴ and the names of all the wealthy African Americans in the United States.³⁶⁵ These statistics, he believed, provided examples of progress and proved the ability of African Americans to succeed. Here, he perpetuated the racial uplift theory through demonstrating racial progress and representation. Johnson argued that the march to equality was won through education and economic equality. As he finished this section, he concluded:

In closing this chapter on the *progress* of the race since the war, we desire to say to you, our young readers, that much has been done, as you have read in this chapter, to raise the race in the estimation of the world, but much more remains to be done. What has been said in this chapter is not to make you content and satisfied, but rather, to inspire new zeal and fresh courage, that each one of you may add something more to what has already been accomplished. You can, you must, and we believe you will. Do not falter on account of difficulties. Set your standards high and go to it, remembering that labor, coupled with a strong devotion to integrity, will surely conquer.³⁶⁶

Johnson yearned to bring pride to the past for African Americans and to demonstrate the progress and accomplishments that they have achieved. But even in his encouragement to aim high, he emphasized hard work, labor, and integrity as keys to success. He did not mention protest or rebellion against the injustice and racism endured in the North and South. Through this, Johnson exemplified the accommodationist and reconciliationist philosophy that Booker T. Washington made famous. Johnson was forced to fight on the terms of the dominant social narrative, the Lost Cause, and his challenge sometimes only made the Lost Cause stronger. Despite this, he still forged a bridge that later would overthrow the Lost Cause.

Conclusion

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 163.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 164-165.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 165-166.

Edward Johnson strove to overturn the stereotypes and racism brought on by the popularization of the Lost Cause. In his fight against this popular narrative, Johnson often promoted a similarly problematic one that followed the dominant philosophies of accommodation and racial progress in the black community. This path sometimes caused more harm than good as it perpetuated the faithful slave stereotype, cementing it further in the national narrative. Despite trying to work within the system of racial hierarchy, Johnson highlighted the heroic and brilliant capabilities of his race with numerous examples of incredible African Americans. Johnson wanted to give young black children new role models in a school system that ignored black contributions to the creation and success of America. In this way, he succeeded.

Conclusion: The Lost Cause Today

The 1890s was a decade of turmoil, economic panic, social and political upheaval. The final ray of hope left from Reconstruction for African Americans vanished in the disorder of the 1890s. In the South after the Civil War, African Americans were increasingly disenfranchised, and segregation was upheld in 1896 by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The revitalized Lost Cause narrative surged into public awareness and became increasingly powerful in the national memory. The contention of the period between Lost Cause organizations and their opponents, neo-abolitionists and African American intellectuals, further solidified this narrative. This popularity, as well as several other factors, led to the spiral into the Jim Crow era.

Textbooks were a major influence in this descent. The power of school-based indoctrination ensured the longevity of the movement. Textbooks such as Lee's and Stephens's socialized children into believing in the tenets of the Lost Cause, perpetuating the narrative. From a young age, they were taught that the South fought over states' rights, slavery was beneficial, and Reconstruction failed because of the ignorance and depravity of Southern blacks. These teachings formed the basis of how Southern students understood history and race in America, perpetuating the cycle of violence and racism.

Not all voices were buried during Jim Crow. As we saw with Higginson and Johnson, their textbooks attempted to counter the Lost Cause-influenced history. African Americans and their white allies never stopped fighting for racial equality: social, political, and economical. Though these texts were often outliers and not mainstream, they represented the ever-present soldiers for civil equality who fought for a national narrative that presented an accurate portrayal of their experiences and history—not just the white Protestant male's.

These textbooks may have ultimately failed, however, to beat back the overwhelming power of the Lost Cause narrative. Written by people of that time, they were forced to fight on Southerner's terms. This weakened position led occasionally to the further reinforcement of the Lost Cause as seen in Higginson's portrayal of the postwar era and his switch of focus from emancipation to reconciliation and Johnson's ideas of racial progress, which supported the myth of the faithful slave. Despite their occasional accidental fortification of the Lost Cause, their fight for a more representational equal history formed a platform for future generations to continue the battle. Slowly their voices were heard.

It would be a mistake to read this thesis and simply dismiss it as history. While so much progress has been made, the Lost Cause mythology still persists. The alt-white rally in Charlottesville in 2017 and the deeply set structural racism that makes up our government are just two examples. The Confederate flag flies in many states in celebration of the South's unique "history." The claim of heritage attempts to disavow all the problematic pieces of the Confederacy and just celebrate the ideal. Claims of racism are brushed aside as people declare that they are honoring their family's history, ignoring what that history is based upon. Even people who do not celebrate the Confederacy resist attempts to acknowledge the lingering effects of the slavery and the Jim Crow era. Recently, the reaction to a new national memorial to lynching victims in Montgomery Alabama demonstrates these themes. The opinions of some Montgomery residents are summarized in the phrase "let sleeping dogs lie."³⁶⁷ This quotation encapsulates the belief that burying the shameful parts of our history is preferable; the belief that recognizing this painful past will stir up further hatred. The past is not buried however. Racism and the lingering shadows from the Jim Crow era are seen in the overabundance of black men in

³⁶⁷ Sam Levin, "Lynching Memorial Leaves Some Quietly Seething: 'Let Sleeping Dogs Lie'," *The Guardian*, April 28, 2019.

our prison system, the murder of people of color by our police, and more. Acknowledging that this “past” still effects people today and that the legacy of the Lost Cause is present in many parts of our society is the only way to move forward.

The Lost Cause still exists in school textbooks today. Modern history textbooks are whitewashed one-dimensional texts that present history as a list of facts to be learned instead of a constant debate based on evidence. With the civil rights movement, feminist movement, and many more, textbooks have become more inclusive, especially in the twentieth-first century, but they removed all controversial ideas about historical and present figures as faultless. The Lost Cause has turned from explicit to more hidden, but no less insidious, tucked into passages that blandly state pieces of it as fact. The ideas of the faithful slave, states’ rights not slavery, the victimization of the South, the invincibility of the South, and the cult of the fallen soldier so greatly influenced textbooks for almost one hundred years that their marks are still visible today even with an attempted shift from this Lost Cause mindset. There are many reasons for this whitewashing—pressure from communities and the textbook adoption committee, the wish to protect children from harm or exposure to conflict, the want to avoid uncertainties or the need to provide clear answer, and more—but the ultimate reason is the desire to create a patriotic, loyal citizenry.³⁶⁸ Stephens, Lee, Higginson, and Johnson all shared this aspiration, though it manifested itself in different ways, and wrote their textbooks with a clear agenda to shape history in a way that spread *their* message. They deliberately used the past to create a new generation of children who followed their way of thinking. Stephens and Lee were largely successful.

The only way to change the national understanding of the War between the States is to be cognizant and to think critically and to not accept blindly. We have come so far from Lee’s

³⁶⁸ James K. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook got Wrong*, 2nd ed. (New York: Touchstone, 2007), 28.

causal remarks of black degeneracy, Higginson's disregard for African American's role in their own emancipation, and Johnson's accommodation with problematic racial narratives. We are not yet at the finish line. One way to fight forward is to challenge what is accepted, especially in the pages of our textbooks. We have to reevaluate our education system. Education is the great social leveler, but we must look closely at what we teach in our classroom. A whitewashed history alienates people of color and presents an uncontested past and one narrative as fact. Our minds must remain open and critical to understand our nuanced past and forge ahead into the future of greater acceptance and equality between all people. Accepting a complicated, conflicted, and sometimes adverse history is a necessary step forward.